



Agricultural Land Commission's independence at risk

Last month I wrote about the BC Liberal government's plans to reduce the Agricultural Land Commission's independence and ability to protect the Agricultural Land Reserve. Their scheme gives control of land use decisions for nearly half of our province to the Oil and Gas Commission, and allows for the government to take over the rest of the Commission's independent responsibilities.

The Agricultural Land Commission was established in 1973, when then Premier Dave Barrett recognized the need to permanently protect our province's valuable agricultural land – some of the most fertile in all of Canada. The Commission then established a special land use zone, the Agricultural Land Reserve, to protect BC's supply of agricultural land.

Only five per cent of BC's land base is productive farmland and we produce only about half as much food as we consume. According to the 2012 report from the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability, if things continue as they are, the world will need at least 50 per cent more food by 2030.

From an economic perspective, the agriculture industry brings billions of dollars a year to our province's economy. An amazing accomplishment since our farmers receive the least provincial government support in all of Canada.

On a related matter, my colleague and Environment critic, Spencer Chandra Herbert, and I recently sent a [letter](#) to Energy Minister Bill Bennett calling on the government to restore independent oversight over the Site C Dam project and expand public hearings. I am deeply concerned about the lack of oversight by independent agencies such as the BC Utilities Commission and the Agricultural Land Commission when it comes to BC Hydro. With close to 4,000 hectares of prime BC farmland at stake, I think everyone has cause for concern. Accountability at BC Hydro is essential if we are to contain the runaway rate increases forecast for the coming 5 years.

If Site C is the right project for the province, it will withstand oversight by these independent agencies and scrutiny from people across the entire province, not just those in the north. The government track record is sketchy

when it comes to listening to experts and the result is more costs for consumers and business at a time when most can least afford it.

When the new Legislative session begins in the coming weeks, I'll be working with my colleagues to hold government to account on these important issues. It has been seven months since the government called MLAs together to work on solving the challenges in our communities and across the province. The evidence around the importance of food and food production is clear. With these statistics and a province so rich with agricultural land, I'll be asking why our government is looking to dismantle our protective agencies and lessen safeguards for our province's food supply.

Here in Juan de Fuca, our population is increasing at a rapid rate. More and more people are taking an interest in purchasing locally grown food and are understanding the increasing need for food security now and into the future. We need to protect our valuable food producing regions and the industries they support, not have a government that

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Community Office

WEST SHORE OFFICE
Monday–Friday
10am–4pm

NEW LOCATION
122–2806 Jacklin Rd
Victoria, BC

T: 250-391-2801

john.horgan.mla
@leg.bc.ca

www.johnhorgan.ca

Follow John on
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COMMUNITY EVENTS

Starting Jan 15 Operation Kidsafe Child Fingerprinting Station. The Kidsafe system produces a lifetime safety record of a child and if there is ever an emergency, parents will then be better prepared to give law enforcement vital information so they can act quickly. Jenner Chevrolet-Buick-GMC plans to provide this service to all local families *free of charge* and only the parent gets a record of the visit. The latest Operation Kidsafe all-digital equipment will be on site full-time starting January 15 at Jenner, 1730 Old Island Hwy. Info: 250-474-1211.

Jan 25 Winter Walk in Nature. Walk a wintry trail with a CRD Regional Parks naturalist to observe and reflect upon the natural world we encounter during this season of cold. Meet at the Witty's Lagoon Nature Centre off Metchosin Rd. Ages 5 and up, 1-2:30pm, free. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Jan 25 Robbie Burns Night. Join the Shirley Hill Boogies in a celebration of Robbie Burns with a concert featuring the Celtic Reflections. Only 70 tickets available at Shirley Delicious, The Stick in the Mud and the Sooke Shoppers Drug Mart. Tickets are \$15 or 2 for \$25, 7:30-9:30pm, Shirley Community Hall. Info: boogies@briarmoon.ca/FB

Jan 25 Encore of 'Metchosin's Got Talent'. Talents of Metchosin Youth. Last year's show was a blast. This year is even better! Sponsored by the Metchosin Youth Action Project and students of Pearson College. Info: Grant Sawyer 250-474-5903.

Jan 26 Robbie Burns Dinner. Traditional dinner of Haggis, taters and neeps – all the fixings of a Robbie Burns dinner with entertainment and frivolities. Tickets available at the Sooke Legion Bar for \$35. Cocktails at 5, dinner at 6pm. Sooke Legion, 6726 Eustace Rd. Info: 250-642-4414.

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undermines the independence of the Agricultural Land Commission. I urge you to let Ministers Pimm and Bennett know your views. You can send them your thoughts at:

Minister Pat Pimm
Ministry of Agriculture
PO BOX 9043, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W9E2
E-Mail: AGR.Minister@gov.bc.ca
Tel: 250 387-1023

Minister Bill Bennett
Ministry of Energy and Mines
PO Box 9060 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W9E2
E-Mail: MEM.Minister@gov.bc.ca
Tel: 250-387-5896

Once our agricultural land has been developed, we won't be able to get it back. The land use decisions we make today are ones that we, and many generations to come, will have to live with.

John Horgan, MLA Juan de Fuca
www.johnhorgan.ca

Grant Search Assistance

Are you looking for grant funding for a project? The Legislative Library has access to a database and can assist in searching for grant funding organizations. This database lists hundreds of corporate community investment programs, government funding programs and American foundations that will fund Canadian charities.

All requests are confidential and library staff are non-partisan. You can make your request through our office, or to contact the Legislative Library, [CLICK HERE](#).

Calling Volunteer Firefighters



Many of you may have heard that the Sooke Fire Rescue Service has recently been advised that an area north of Sooke will be downgraded to a lower protection rate. They have one year to increase their number of firefighters before their insurance rates rise significantly.

With continued growth, recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters has been a challenge for many of our local departments.

Volunteer fire departments provide a wide range of emergency and non-emergency services to our communities. Not all volunteers are expected to put

out fires or provide rescue and emergency medical services. Volunteers can assist with community relations such as the promotion of fire safety and educational programs.

Perhaps now is the time that you can fulfill that wish to help your community. If you're interested in learning what it takes to become a **Sooke Fire Rescue** volunteer, [CLICK HERE](#).

For other areas of the region:

- > **East Sooke, Malahat, Port Renfrew and Shirley:** [CLICK HERE](#).
- > **Highlands:** [CLICK HERE](#).
- > **Langford:** [CLICK HERE](#).
- > **Metchosin:** [CLICK HERE](#).
- > **Otter Point:** [CLICK HERE](#).

→ Last Fall, John participated in the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, hosted by Surfrider Vancouver Island chapter and BC Parks. John worked with Kate Wilson, from Combing the Coast, and many other volunteers to help clean up Sombrio Beach.



← Many thanks to everyone who attended our Open House in December. John is seen here with friends Kody Bell & Mark Bridges.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Jan 26 Family Learning Tour
in celebration of Family Literacy Day. The Westshore Family Learning Tour will be hosting this second free, fun-filled event aimed at bringing awareness to the literacy and learning that happens in our daily lives. Events are all around the Westshore from 12 to 4pm. Prizes, games and some snacks too! Check out their listing and find one or two that you can attend. Info: [CLICK HERE](#) for locations, times and map.

Jan 29 Ready, Set, Learn.
Sooke School District invites 3 & 4 year-olds and their families to attend this great event! Kids can play and learn with hands-on activities and receive a goody bag full of fun! Parents can find out how to support their child's learning and development. Westshore Town Centre from 12 to 4pm and Sooke Community Hall from 10am to 1pm. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Jan 29 Bedtime Shenanigans. Ready, Set, Learn invites children 0-5yrs to join them for pre-bedtime fun. There will be games, snacks, stories and songs. Running shoes suggested and PJ's are fine. Activities are in the gym at Ecole John Stubbs from 6 to 7pm. Free with no registration required. Info: RMelanson@sd62.bc.ca

Feb 5 Sooke Food CHI Annual General Meeting. Come to the Sooke Harbour House for the AGM with deserts and tea. Sooke Harbour House Potlatch Room at 7:30pm. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Feb 12 Awareness Film Night's "Kuper Island: Return to the Healing Circle". There will be a post screening talk and slide show with residential school survivors Alex Nelson and Belvie Brebber. Carey Newman will speak about his Witness Blanket art project. 7pm Edward Milne Community School. Admission by donation. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Feb 26 Public Consultation for People With Disabilities – Register Now! You're invited to share your thoughts about how government, businesses and communities can better support people with disabilities to fully participate in our communities. Consultations are being held to form a White Paper which will be discussed at a Summit in June 2014. Sessions are filling up quickly so register now for Victoria sessions (1:30 to 4pm or 7 to 9:30pm). You must register on line to attend: [CLICK HERE](#).

Do you have an upcoming community event? Send full event information to John.Horgan.MLA@leg.bc.ca and we'll do our best to fit it in!