

Hon. Helena Jaczek, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Public Services and Procurement
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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Hon. Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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Right Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON

Re: Disposal of Federal lands risks food supply disruptions in Surrey, BC

I am writing to you to make you aware of a threat to British Columbia's domestic food supply and green economy.

Federally owned farmlands, vital to Western Canada's domestic summer vegetable supply are being disposed of by PSPC, risking disruption to the summer food supply in Western Canada. The issue has recently been presented to Parliament in the form of a House of Commons Petition ([E-4128](#)) by MP John Aldag. I understand that the Government of Canada will respond to the petition during the next weeks. I am writing to you as a grower of produce on the farmlands to provide background information on the situation.

The unique parcel of farmland is vital to Western Canada's domestic food supply.

The farmland produces much of Western Canada's first field vegetable production each year. This year the parcel produced approximately 70% of BC's domestic potato supply from May till Aug 1. In addition, it produced the majority of early carrots, cabbage, parsnips and much of the earliest winter squash. Each year the parcel produces 30-50 million vegetable servings - enough for a serving for every Metro Vancouverite for 2-3 weeks.

Due to its micro-climate, hilltop location and unique drainage, the farmland produces vegetables before other land in Canada. The land is so unique that potatoes can be planted in February and carrots can be harvested as late as December. No other farmland contributes so much to BC's domestic field produce supply from May to the beginning of August as this 220-acre parcel does.

Public Services and Procurement is currently in the process of disposing of the farmlands.

This parcel, located at 3884 192nd Street has been managed for years by Ministry of Innovation Science and Economic Development (ISED). ISED declared the land to be surplus to its needs and the Parcel is in the process of being disposed of. Disposal of the farmland makes it extremely vulnerable to being lost from food production which has significant implications for the domestic field vegetable supply.

The land has been owned by the Federal Government since the 1940s having been used as a communications facility. In 1974, Heppells Potato Corp began investing in the sandy land and through regenerative agriculture methods, building to soil into its current highly productive state.

The federal government still appears committed to disposing the farmland. Our understanding is that Public Services & Procurement Canada (PSPC) is about to solicit Expressions of Interest from federal departments, Crown corporations, provinces, municipalities and Indigenous groups before offering the land for sale to the public.

Protecting the land is in the public interest:

The land plays a core role in the domestic food supply due to capacity to produce early crops reliably. This impacts overall market access for the domestic supply and the regions resiliency to food crises.

Supply continuity, early crop production and market access:

BC has a vibrant domestic produce supply that feeds a large minority of BC's produce demand. Local supplies begin in May with the early potatoes from the Federal Lands in question. Losing the land risks losing this early local food supply. It also jeopardizes the onset of the local vegetable supply which requires large and reliable produce volumes to ensure continuity of supply for retailers and wholesalers. The at-risk farmland plays a critical role in this supply continuity. When other fields in BC begin to produce, they cannot reliably be harvested after rainfall. At such times, retailers rely on the Federal lands with its superb drainage to keep their shelves stocked. All of this is important for ensuring a domestic food supply for a healthy population with stable more affordable food prices.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation:

California's produce travels 1000's of kilometers with all the associated greenhouse gas emissions. As climate change induced droughts and water restrictions intensify, California's export capacity is being squeezed. Meanwhile, extreme weather events in the last two years have exposed BC's vulnerability to highway closures and flooding of key food producing areas. The land in question is not in a flood zone and is extremely resilient to extreme weather events due to its exceptional drainage. It is also centrally located for serving the Metro-Vancouver market allowing deliveries to be made regardless of trade issues and highway closures. In sum, land is well positioned to provide resilience to future food supply shocks.

There is substantial public interest in protecting the land:

Millions have learned about the risk losing this land poses on Social Media. **70,000** people have signed a petition at [Change.org/savethefarmland](https://www.change.org/savethefarmland) asking that the land be protected for farming.

There has been considerable media interest in protecting the lands:

CBC News <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/campbell-heights-farmers-1.6482106> and

CBC - TV <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1oFPwYI2mo>.

CBC radio: <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-46/clip/15920576>

Global News: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8934598/surrey-farmers-protect-farmland-from-sale/>

Front page of The Province <https://epaper.theprovince.com/article/281543704595269>
<https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/surrey-field-produces-millions-of-vegetables-for-bc-but-could-be-paved-over-for-warehouses-5496337>

Can you help build a healthier, more resilient future by helping to protect this land?

The following measures could protect the land:

- 1) *placing a covenant on the land excluding its use from anything other than domestic food production.*
- 2) *foregoing the farmland's disposal*
- 3) *granting a long-term lease to a local farmer*
- 4) *by apply to include the farmland into BC's Agricultural Land Reserve and*

We would be delighted to show you the land and assist you with information relevant to the issue.

Yours sincerely,



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Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, P.C., M.P., Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

Hon. Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P.

Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries BC

MP John Aldag, M.P.

Hon MP Kerry-Lynne Findlay, M.P.

MP Tako van Pota, M.P.

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Ben Black, Regional Manager Real Estate Services PSPC

Jennifer Dyson, Chair of the Agricultural Land Commission

Dr. Deborah Henderson, Director or the Institute for Sustainable Horticulture, KPU

Dr. Renee Prasad, Agriculture Department Chair, University of the Fraser Valley (UFV)

Dr. Lenore Newman, Director of the Food and Agriculture Institute (UFV)