



October 28, 2020

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Brad Sperling, Chair
and Council Members
Peace River Regional District
Email: brad.sperling@prrd.bc.ca

Dear Brad Sperling and Council Members:

I would like to thank you and your colleagues for meeting with me at this year's virtual Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Annual Convention process to discuss some of the agricultural issues and pressures Peace River RD is experiencing. As a provincial election has been called, and we are currently in an interregnum period, I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Ministry.

Due to the evolving COVID-19 situation, we have had to develop new approaches and adaptations to many aspects of our everyday life. I thank your delegation for its flexibility with provincial appointments this year and I am pleased that our governments still had the chance to connect.

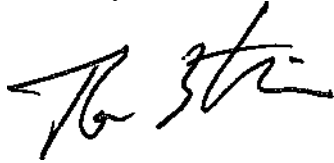
During our meeting, we discussed some of the changes around Business Risk Management. We also discussed the Future of BC food's system report, specifically your concern that it does not reflect the Peace Region, and the weight imbalance between the Province and big business within the report. Additionally, I have also included an overview of the Food Hub Network program with this letter.

Now that we are in the election period, issues regarding future funding programs and other policy decisions must be deferred until after the election is complete and the incoming government is in place. All topics brought up in your meeting will be shared with the incoming Minister.

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Again, thank you for participating in this year's convention and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Ethier', written in a cursive style.

Tom Ethier
Deputy Minister

The B.C. Food Hub Network

Context

The Ministry of Agriculture has heard directly from farmers, processors, industry associations and post-secondary institutions that B.C.'s agriculture and food sectors need increased access to processing facilities and specialized processing equipment, business services, research and development, and innovation supports to advance a competitive food and beverage processing sector in the province.

To respond to this need, the Ministry conceptualized the B.C. Food Hub Network as a joint effort with industry, communities, post-secondary institutions and other levels of government. This initiative is an innovative, novel model that is intended to be reflective of provincial priorities and regional diversity.

Overview

The BC Food Hub Network ('Network') aims to foster growth and innovation in the processing sector through improved industry access to facilities, equipment, technology, technical services and business supports. The Network model is being developed in collaboration with industry, communities and post-secondary institutions. It is an innovative approach that is intended to build provincial food and beverage processing while serving the regional and sector diversity of the province.

The BC Food Hub Network will be comprised of a Food and Beverage Innovation Centre at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Vancouver and a series of inter-connected regional Food Processing and Innovation Hubs ('Food Hubs') across the province that will be regionally-tailored, shared food innovation and processing facilities. The Network will bring together services and technology that improve supports to the agriculture, seafood, and food processing industry and advance innovation in the Province's processing sector.

Vision

Leading the world in food and beverage processing and innovation.

Mission

Helping B.C.'s food and beverage businesses grow, innovate and commercialize.

Regional Food Hubs

The Ministry of Agriculture is supporting a series of regional Food Hubs including a pilot and demonstration Food Hub, located at Commissary Connect's Laurel Street facility in Vancouver, a Food Hub in Port Alberni and in Surrey both of which launched in summer 2020. Two additional Food Hubs are being established in Quesnel and Salmon Arm.

UBC Food and Beverage Innovation Centre

The Ministry of Agriculture is currently supporting the development of the UBC Food and Beverage Innovation Centre, to be located at UBC's Vancouver campus, through an endowed professorship position. Dr. Anubhav Singh, who currently holds the professorship, will help to:

- Improve B.C.'s food processors' access to modern processing technology and practices;
- Provide expertise to help the sector continue to innovate and develop new products;
- Support the creation of new potential post-secondary programs in B.C. to develop qualified personnel who will to help grow the industry locally;
- Lead development of the B.C. Food and Beverage Innovation Centre at UBC Vancouver; and
- Facilitate improved research and information sharing for processors accessing the B.C. Food Hub Network.

The logo for feedBC, featuring the word 'feed' in a red, lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by 'BC' in a larger, bold, red, uppercase, sans-serif font.

The B.C. Food Hub Network

What the B.C. Food Hub Network Will Offer

Infrastructure & Equipment

- Shared, commercial production and kitchen spaces
- Shared office space
- Storage and distribution facilities
- Regionally-tailored processing and packaging equipment

Mentorship and Training Support

- Access to business mentors and industry experts
- Product development support

Innovation, Product Development and Testing Services

- R&D and analytical testing
- Product/prototype/process development, demonstration/proof of concept, commercialization/market validation
- Collaborative opportunities with academic institutions, industry associations and public and private companies

Networking and Information Sharing

- Technology platforms and/or digital resource portals to virtually connect Food Hubs
- Mechanism to support facilities/equipment booking and operation
- Support for information sharing and knowledge transfer between sites

Partnerships

The Ministry of Agriculture is working closely with industry associations, post-secondary institutions, local governments and regional organizations to develop and implement the Food Hub Network.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Dennis Jess, Manager, Food Innovation
B.C. Ministry of Agriculture

E: Dennis.Jess@gov.bc.ca | P: 778 974-3832

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/growbc-feedbc-buybc/feed-bc/feed-bc-the-bc-food-hub-network>

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