



**FarmFolk CityFolk Society**  
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Presentation to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
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*[This is the text of our written submission. The oral presentation was curtailed due to time constraints.]*

Founded in 1993, FarmFolk CityFolk is B.C.'s oldest and largest food and agriculture charitable non-profit. We have earned a reputation as a sector collaborator, program catalyst, community builder, and trusted voice for food growers.

We work from seed to plate to address barriers to sustainable farming and support the sector through innovative programs, policy advocacy, and education. Through these activities, we engage a network of farmers, seed growers, researchers, food system advocates, policymakers, community partners, and eaters.

FarmFolk CityFolk operates on the unceded and sovereign territories of many Indigenous Nations. We work together to deepen our understanding and take action personally and within our organization's programs, seeking to address this colonial reality. Our first recommendation is, therefore, for the province to make significant investment into reckoning with land justice in BC. Canada and BC both enacted legislation to integrate the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Additionally, with the repudiation by the Vatican earlier this year of the concept of *terra nullius*, colonial governments can no longer make the argument and perpetuate the practice of simply asserting sovereignty over territories that have been occupied and stewarded by Indigenous Nations since time immemorial.

The majority of BC's land has never been part of an historical nor modern treaty. For many, the idea of truly reckoning with land justice is unimaginable. But just because we cannot imagine what it will mean to come into something resembling a fair and honorable relationship with the First Peoples of the place called British Columbia, does not mean that we can ignore the task. Indigenous Peoples around the world laboured for decades to bring about UNDRIP; we can expect that same determination and vision will be applied now that *terra nullius* has been repudiated. **We urge the BC government to be proactive, thoughtful, humble, and generous in tackling land justice within our province. The level of investment will need to be significant and it must include substantial funding to enable the leadership and full participation of Indigenous Nations in dialogue and action.** These are uncharted territories in terms of settler - Indigenous collaboration that does not subordinate Indigenous Peoples to the colonial state. But BC has long been a leader of visionary undertakings: the time for land justice is long overdue.



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**Our second recommendation is to make strategic and targeted investments in the Indigenous and settler fishers and farming professionals** who contribute so much to BC's food security.

We appreciate the investment in communal food security and food supply resilience by the provincial government both within the Ministry of Agriculture and more broadly. The atmospheric rivers that brought about the flooding of Sumas Prairie also severed the lower mainland from the rest of the province. Since the vast majority of BC's food supply flows through the lower mainland, this disruption of all transportation corridors amply demonstrated the vulnerability of long supply chains and of "just in time delivery" that is so common in the food sector. In order to ensure that future extreme weather events, here and elsewhere, do not undermine the food supplies of BC communities, it is vital to rebuild distributed capacity throughout the province. This means that where local conditions are suitable, diverse agricultural sectors are supported to thrive in each foodshed, and fishing knowledge and infrastructure is found throughout our coastal communities.

We cannot build our future food resilience by drawing on patently wrong assumptions that bigger is better, that concentration has only upsides and no downsides, and that monopolies serve the public good. It is vital, when climate change and political unrest are threatening our access to distant food sources, that we invest in the people and infrastructure here in BC that produce nutrient dense foods for our own population. People can grow chlorophyll on their window sills but they cannot produce dairy, oils, root crops, or protein very easily. Private investors may want to chase the current vertical farming trend that produces lettuce and strawberries, but public dollars need to be spent so that the core dietary needs of our population will be secured to the greatest degree possible. We need to understand farmers and fishers as the professionals at the critical foundations of our food supply chains.

**Our third recommendation is that Farmers and fish harvesters need targeted programs to enable them to invest in practices that will help them to shift to more climate-friendly practices and build resilience for their enterprises.**

Despite the fact that farmers and fish harvesters provide the food that is so essential to our daily lives, they are both sectors with a long history of marginal economic viability. As such, they are rightfully "risk averse", making the best decisions that they can each day, with little financial wiggle room. Equity deserving farmers and fish harvesters - those marginalized within our societies - face even more significant challenges.



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It is also a fact that the production and movement of food along supply chains contribute significantly to the climate crisis that we are in, both in terms of harms to ecosystems as well as contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. Farmers and fishers need investments to assist them in shifting to cleaner and more ecological practices. Lowering risk and contributing to our collective 2030 and 2050 climate goals can be met through two measures: funding that assists with necessary infrastructure investments; and knowledge mobilization.

Transitioning away from fossil fuels can be challenging on farms, depending on location and complexity within the farm operation. Investment that can support that transition as well as others that enable more climate friendly farming will be necessary so that farmers can contribute to reaching our collective climate goals. There is also a need to enhance the budget for the delivery of knowledge transfer, which is being provided by expert non-profits, industry organizations, academic institutions, and the Ministry of Agriculture. With increased investment, not only will there be an accelerated and positive farm-level change, there will be greater opportunity to bring coherence and complementarity between the range of offerings.

BC needs similar programs that address the challenging economics of ecologically sustainable fisheries in oceans dramatically impacted by climate change and overharvesting. Thriving independent fish harvesters are vital to the wellbeing of coastal communities and beyond.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you and for all your hard work.