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# Victoria Urban Food Table

February 18, 2019

Re: Regional Food & Farmland Trust

Dear Kevin Lorette and the CRD Planning & Protective Services Committee,

On behalf of the members of the Victoria Urban Food Table, we are pleased to write this letter of support for the development of a Regional Food & Farmland Trust (RFFLT). The Victoria Urban Food Table is a grouping of some 70 organizations and individuals whose primary purpose is to work together to support increased urban food production as an important part of developing a healthy, ecological and sustainable food system in Greater Victoria. Vibrancy around food in our cities and sustainable food provisioning is at the heart of what we do and access to land is a crucial component to this.

The members of the Urban Food Table feel that establishing a RFFLT is an important project that will address one of the greatest barriers to farming in our region, which is access to land to farmers (both new and existing). The issue of farmland access goes beyond the individual needs of farmers; it is a food security challenge for our region and country. The Urban Food Table is supportive of a RFFLT as the values align with that of the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan<sup>1</sup> particularly section 17.19 and 17.19.1 articulating that the City of Victoria will work "with neighbouring municipalities, the Capital Regional District, the provincial government and other food system stakeholders to increase the regional food supply by establishing policies, tools and initiatives to protect and expand working farmland, such as a regional farmland trust".

A RFFLT is indeed just one strategy to land access and one that shows great promise and support from organizations and individuals such as those that make up our network. A mechanism such as a RFFLT has the potential to remove land from market forces, protecting farmland from speculation or development and providing a means for local farmers, emerging agrarians, Indigenous food provisioners and others to gain access to land, and build a strong local food economy, and drive public engagement around local food systems<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, it has potential to keep land in continued production, deliver succession/farm transfer options and provide agricultural training, mentorship and resources<sup>3</sup>. The Victoria Urban Food Table sees a RFFLT as a space for food provisioning business incubation, education and engagement which align with our values and mission for a rich and diverse

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<sup>1</sup> City of Victoria. 2012 Updated July 2017. *Official Community Plan*. P122.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis, J. E. and Wittman, H. 2014. *Farmland Access in BC—Research Summary*. P7.

<sup>3</sup> CRFAIR. 2015. *Findings Report Exploring Farm and Food Lands Access in the CRD: A Local Government Farmland Trust Approach*. P4.



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food economy and ecology. Furthermore, underutilized lands have been identified across the CRD that could be used as pilot sites to build out the operational procedures of the RFFLT.

A RFFLT is one tool that can contribute to enhancing farmland to ensure the continuity of a productive food sector in the CRD and better use the land we have. We feel this initiative will provide an immense benefit to a wide range of communities and help strengthen and grow the foodscapes in our region.

Sincerely,  
Ben Clark & Aaren Topley  
Co-chairs, Victoria Urban Food Table

