

Langley Farmers Institute

Questions for the Provincial Candidates

Secure, affordable access to farmland is a critical barrier to new entrant farmers, especially those who do not have access to generational wealth. What policies and programs do you envision implementing to support secure farmland access in the province?

- Farming and food production is a critical industry that is undergoing generational change, and we need to start thinking creatively to encourage young people and other new-entrant farmers to get involved.
- As an Independent MLA I would support:
 - Programs that provide tax and other incentives to new farmers and innovative agricultural production models.
 - Streamlining the BC Assessment process by which properties request farm status
 - Advocating for the provision of public land for community and youth groups (e.g. 4H, Young Agrarians) to develop small-scale farms that would help encourage the next generation of farmers.

The NDP passed a resolution at its last convention to buy back ALR land. Do you foresee this to be an effective long-term strategy for protecting farmland? Please explain. If not, what material actions do you feel are needed to ensure the future of farmland access for British Columbians?

- As an Independent MLA, with no political agenda, I can focus on issues important to farmers and their farmland and be a strong voice for you in Victoria.

Climate change is now undeniable and as farmers and farm workers, we are on the front lines of the climate crisis. How do you envision the future of climate change policy in British Columbia with regards to the agricultural sector? Moreover, what programs would you put in place to provide concrete support to farmers facing the entertaining climate and financial crises that characterize our current situation?

- As an Independent MLA I would:
 - Ensure that the farmers and producers are aware of current strategies and funding available from AgriServiceBC and others like the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.

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- Fight for sufficient Ministry of Agriculture staffing for assistance and guidance with understanding the strategies and completion of funding applications.
- Consult with local and provincial farmers and farming organizations (Langley Farmers Institute, BC Agricultural Council, others) to clarify that current AgriService BC strategies are working / how they can be improved to address how local climate change is affecting farming practices, and listen to their thoughts on how our agricultural industry can best be supported to meet this challenge.

How does your government intend to make meaningful consultations with Indigenous leaders with respect to land management and in British Columbia? What have you learned from your previous engagement with these communities during your time in politics and where would you like to see this engagement go?

- As an Independent MLA, I would support discussions regarding public consultation, transparent land management processes, and timely public land decisions that are in the best interests of Indigenous peoples and all British Columbians.

What do you think “food security” means? What role do you see yourself, as a politician, playing in determining the sociopolitical, economic, and environmental conditions in which food security can be accomplished?

- Food security is something I have been passionate about for a long time, through my work with Langley Meals on Wheels, the Let’s Talk Food initiative, the Aldergrove Rotary Starfish Backpack Program, many seniors’ groups, and other local food-related programs.
- All people should be able to consume nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. Local food security can lead to improved community health, food safety, strengthened local economies, reduced negative environmental impacts, and enhanced resilience in the face of threats to the global food system.
- Food can also foster community connectedness, between producers and consumers and people with diverse cultural backgrounds.
- In the last few years there has been about a 30% increase in BC residents accessing food banks. The price of basic foods has skyrocketed, in part because of high taxes on fuel, which affects not only the public but also farmers (gas for tractors and other farming equipment), and truckers being able to get farm products to market. I will fight for fair taxes and streamlined government, which has a direct and dramatic effect on people’s ability to put food on the table.
- As the elected Independent MLA for Langley-Abbotsford, some key areas that I would focus on concerning food security include:

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- Support and advocate to advance food security by ensuring policies, practices, and programs address food security issues at the provincial, regional, and community levels.
- Encourage growth and innovation in BC's agricultural sector.
- Current Agricultural Land Reserve regulations limit how farmland can be used. It's time we look at innovative ways to improve and support local food production.

Provincial staff levels at the Ministry of Agriculture are very, very low. Even for the other branches that handle well registration and licensing applications.

These low staff levels affect grants for water infrastructure and food production.

With all the additional provincial issues at the 'table', how can you guarantee that farmers can keep farming, if they cannot contact the Ministry and receive help? Five years to wait for a groundwater license is very detrimental to crop production.

- In meeting with the BC Agricultural Council earlier this year, I was shocked to learn that amongst Canadian provinces BC ranks dead last in public spending as a portion of agriculture's contribution to the GDP, at only 2%. The Canada-wide historical average of direct investment in agriculture is 12%. This is unacceptable.
- As an Independent MLA I would:
 - Push for increasing the Ministry of Agriculture budget to an acceptable level that brings us more in line with the economic impact of the industry and the national average.
 - Push for increased staffing and streamlining in the Ministry of Agriculture. The local critical issues that I am aware of are the unacceptable wait time for processing water licensing and applications for change, lack of support to fill out applications, and need for improved communication from Ministry of Agriculture staffing.

Do you think that the province should work with municipalities to ensure that residents are aware of groundwater licensing? For example, a municipal, free well permit or bylaw to include licensing? The Langley agriculture community needs help, as neighbors of neighbors' wells are dry, while others.....

- As an Independent MLA I can focus on issues that matter to the Langley agriculture community and work with all levels of government to address issues that are important to you.

If elected, will you ensure that your local agricultural voices are heard? Farmers are businesses, they are food producers, and they are active community role models.

- As Past President of both the Aldergrove Agricultural Fair & Festival Association and the BC Farm Museum, I have grown many connections throughout our agricultural community.
- If elected as your Independent MLA I will work to ensure Langley-Abbotsford agricultural voices are heard by doing what I have done for 25+ years – find common-sense solutions to problems and issues by fostering connections and bringing people together.