



Key Request:

The City of Delta is requesting the Minister of Agriculture and Food, Pam Alexis, implement provincial supports to help create additional irrigation water intakes to help mitigate the effects of climate change as the salt wedge migrates further upstream each year.

Background:

Delta stands as one of British Columbia's most vital agricultural communities and a leading food-producing hub. With deep-rooted farming traditions, the city plays a critical role in sustaining the province's food supply. Provincially, Delta consists of 3.5% of British Columbia's total farm capital. Moreover, approximately 50% of Delta's land base lies within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), underscoring its importance in agricultural preservation and productivity.

Despite Delta's significant contributions to the agricultural sector, local farmers are facing growing challenges. The cost of farming inputs and operational expenses have been increasing at a pace faster than revenue growth, tightening profit margins. This economic pressure is exacerbated by the realities of climate change, which is complicating efforts to maintain a stable and reliable water supply for farming.

Currently, about 75% of Delta's agricultural land is actively farmed, producing a diverse range of crops. The top five crop types are forage (1,750 hectares), potatoes (1,272 hectares), field vegetables (1,157 hectares), blueberries (878

hectares), and grains/cereals (544 hectares). These crops are crucial to Delta's agricultural economy and play an integral role in supporting the broader food supply chain within the province.

However, the sustainability of Delta's farming operations is under threat due to a growing reliance on a single irrigation water intake located at the Tasker Pump Station on the Fraser River. This intake is particularly crucial during the late summer months when other intakes become unusable due to the migration of the salt wedge—a phenomenon in which seawater moves upstream as river flows decrease. The salt wedge issue is expected to worsen as climate change continues to drive more frequent and intense drought conditions, further jeopardizing the availability of fresh irrigation water.

The Delta Farmers Institute has expressed serious concerns regarding the long-term viability of the current water supply system. Their top priority is the construction of a second irrigation water intake further upstream, away from the impacts of the salt wedge, to ensure a more reliable and resilient source of water for local farmers. This additional intake would help secure irrigation water during critical periods, particularly in the late summer when crop demand peaks, and freshwater resources are most vulnerable.

As climate change intensifies, it is imperative to act swiftly and invest in critical infrastructure to safeguard Delta's agricultural future. The City of Delta is seeking provincial support and investment to develop additional water intakes that will mitigate the effects of the salt wedge and ensure the long-term sustainability of its agricultural sector. By strengthening Delta's irrigation capacity, we can protect not only the region's farming heritage but also contribute to the resilience of British Columbia's food supply chain in an increasingly unpredictable climate.