

ALR

Ranchers voice concerns at ALR meetings

7

FRUIT

Summerland grower steps up as co-op president

11

REVIVAL

Langley farmers launch local farmers' institute

20



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GOT MILK? Ben vanBoven stands with one of the 50 cows providing the milk his family processes and sells under the Cowichan Milk Co. label. The venture launched September 2 to a receptive market. Read the full story on page 31. AMY PULLEN PHOTO

Parties unite on trespass legislation

Statute amendments a key triumph of annual Ag Day

by PETER MITHAM

VICTORIA – Unanimous support for tough laws to protect agrifood operations against trespassers was a highlight of agriculture day in Victoria this year.

Opposition proposals were embraced by the government, resulting in a rare show of unity among the parties on an issue that has hit farmers hard over the past several years.

“We understand that a farm or a ranch, it’s not just a workplace, it’s a home and it’s a place with children and grandparents. Trespass, mischief, prowling at night, these are all against the law and must be treated as such,” BC agriculture minister Lana Popham told producers and representatives of farm organizations at a reception in Victoria on October 28.

The announcement was met with applause, and BC Agriculture Council chair Stan Vander Waal said farmers

across the province should feel lighter as a result. BCAC urged the province to take action in April, following the invasion of Excelsior Hog Farm by more than 100 activists.

“This was a big ask from agriculture,” he said. “Most of us here feel a lot lighter tonight when it comes down to the confidence we have in our ability to do what we do for agriculture.”

Attorney general David Eby and solicitor general Mike Farnworth stood alongside Popham, pledging their support for the move.

Eby led the charge, introducing the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, which among other things addressed the province’s trespass legislation.

Opposition members stepped up on October 21, with Abbotsford West MLA Mike de Jong asking for an amendment to include

See TRESPASS on next page ↗

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Protesters rally at Ag Day

by PETER MITHAM

VICTORIA – BC agriculture minister Lana Popham is fond of saying that agriculture is having its moment in the public spotlight, and the BC Agriculture Council annual lobbying trip to Victoria is certainly proving a rallying cry for those who want to grab government’s ear.

This year’s event turned into two days of rallies and meetings by council members and government critics alike, beginning with a gathering of

about 100 people on the back steps of the BC legislature building on October 28.

Comox Valley landowner Meghan McPherson, founder of the Changes to Bill 52 group on Facebook that has been a rallying point for critics of tighter regulations governing the Agricultural Land Reserve, led the rally. A dozen BC Liberal caucus members attended while staff distributed a press release demanding the repeal of legislation opposition members say persecutes

farmers in the name of protecting farmland.

Many speakers claimed they weren’t consulted on the changes, despite a nine-member panel travelling the province last year to hear concerns and gather ideas towards a revitalization of the ALR and the commission that oversees it.

“The people they forgot to talk to were the actual farmers,” Delta South MLA Ian Paton, the BC Liberals’

See RALLY on next page ↗

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