

RECOVERY

Proposed disaster policy raises concerns

7

ALR

Producers wary of housing bylaw implications

13

SUPPORT

Eby suggests ag-supportive change coming

21



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### Prepared for anything

Two years after atmospheric rivers inundated his Glen Valley farm, Ben Brandsema is ready to take what comes. While the government's response to flooding in 2021 wasn't perfect, he's hopeful a review of the province's emergency preparedness legislation will make a difference. See story, page 7.

RONDA PAYNE

## Iced wine

Sector says it needs \$317 million in funding to remain viable

PETER MITHAM

PENTICTON – A year on from a catastrophic freeze that killed nearly a third of the southern Interior's grape vines and put the industry on track for a 54% reduction in this year's harvest, government has yet to deliver recovery funding.

"We haven't seen a crisis like this in our industry, ever," says Christa-Lee McWatters, chair of Wine Growers BC and general manager of Time Family of Wines in Penticton. "Once you say climate change, everybody thinks

Weather woes ►

Merry CHRISTMAS

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## Province considers farmland tax

PETER MITHAM

ABBOTSFORD – Unused farmland could be the next front in the province's battle against real estate speculators.

Citing the precedent of the speculation and vacancy tax the province levies on underused housing, BC Premier David Eby said the province is considering applying a version of the tax to underused farmland in the ALR.

"There's a very similar and parallel issue [in housing]," he

said as part of the keynote presentation at the BC Young Farmers' Farm Fest event in Abbotsford, November 16.

BC Young Farmers is a committee of the BC Agriculture Council, whose executive director Danielle Synotte moderated the presentation.

She said the province's anti-speculation efforts have been ongoing for several years, so a proposal to tax unfarmed land is not a surprise.

"This is an ongoing, anti-speculation issue that this

government has worked on for several years now," she said. "Anti-speculation in agriculture? Of course we support that."

The speculation and vacancy tax applies to homes unoccupied for six months or more each year. All residential property owners in the Lower Mainland from Squamish to Chilliwack must file an annual declaration, as well as those in the Capital Regional District and six municipalities north to

Unfarmed land tax ►

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