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COUNTRY LIFE IN BC

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APRIL 2025 | Vol. 111 No. 3



Standing her ground

Rebecca Senicar's family has farmed in Surrey for three generations, giving it a strong connection to the land and a sense of place. She joined a BC Agriculture Council delegation that included BC Young Farmers members like herself in Ottawa last month to present a resolution to the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's annual general meeting urging strong controls on farmland ownership. Read her story on page 13. RONDA PAYNE

Minister endorses farmland loss

ALC yet to decide

PETER MITHAM

COWICHAN BAY – With arable farmland under pressure and food security concerns rising, the province's agriculture minister has come out in favour of flooding 100 acres of productive farmland in Cowichan Bay.

"To have healthy agriculture you need healthy ecosystems, and in the Cowichan Valley estuary we know the natural habitat is vital for salmon, shellfish and other aquatic wildlife, all of which find their way to the

Estuary restoration ▶

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BC ag funding hits record level

PETER MITHAM

VICTORIA – BC is budgeting a 10% boost to spending on agricultural programs and services in the coming fiscal year, a new record.

The provincial budget, released March 4, earmarks \$143 million for BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food operations, programs and services, up from \$130 million last year. The additional funding targets the disruptive effects of extreme weather and trade policies on BC farmers, ranchers and food

producers.

"Since 2017, we've increased the budget for Agriculture and Food by \$50 million," BC agriculture minister Lana Popham told the legislature. "That's not insignificant, and I'm really proud of the work that we've done to get there."

Production Insurance, which has seen record payouts over the past two years, particularly to grape and tree fruit growers hit by extreme cold events, is receiving \$55.2 million, a 32.5% boost over last year.

The ministry's service plan also flags the expansion of programs related to local purchasing. The Buy BC logo is targeted to label 10,500 products this year, up from 9,000 last year.

But funding for the Agricultural Land Commission is unchanged at \$5.5 million, despite a growing demand for compliance and enforcement against unauthorized dumping, on protected farmland.

This was a point of concern

Budget constraints ▶

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