

February 13, 2007

R 07-021

Gordon Campbell, Premier
Province of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 Stn. Prov. Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Mr. Premier:

I am writing to you on behalf of countless constituents of mine who have raised with me their very real concerns about the threat to their quality of life posed by a number of large-scale infrastructure developments planned for the South Delta area and a number of related senior government decisions that will impact future land use in the area.

As one of the architects of the GVRD's Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP), I believe that you, more than most others, appreciate the significance of the fundamental statement in the preamble to that Plan, drawn from the earlier GVRD "Creating Our Future" exercise. That statement speaks clearly to a vision for Greater Vancouver aspiring to become the first urban region in the world where human activities enhance rather than degrade the natural environment and where people control the destiny of their community.

I acknowledge that the LRSP lays out a framework for many of the initiatives being planned and implemented today, including the development of Deltaport's backup lands and the construction of the South Fraser Perimeter Road. But those elements of the Plan were never intended to be implemented without a complete assessment of their impacts on the natural environment and without the kind of due process that fully embraces the principle of citizens controlling the destiny of their community.

In fact, inherent in every element of the LRSP is this notion of maintaining livability and aspiring to that which all humanity aspires on a global basis—a certain quality of life.

Far too many decisions have been made lately by your government and other senior government agencies that do not embrace the notion of protecting our quality of life and balancing economic progress with sustainability at the local level.

The principle motivation behind the Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative—embracing the economic potential that will flow from our strategic position as a trading nation on the Pacific Rim—is a laudable goal. However, I would argue that not enough thought, creativity and innovation has gone into developing the transportation infrastructure plans for the implementation of this initiative.

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To concentrate, in one small corner of the region, all of the proposed ground transportation movements that will result from an expanded Deltaport makes little sense, especially at a time when regional growth patterns have increased commuter demands in this part of the region, with little or no alternative to the automobile as the main mode of transportation. The transportation plans for increased truck traffic and huge increases in rail traffic from Deltaport through this small corner of the Fraser Delta will have a huge negative impact on quality of life, including global impacts with higher emissions from ship, trucks and rail locomotives.

Moreover, the sensitive eco-systems of the Robert Bank foreshore and the first-class Ladner agricultural soils will not only be threatened by the secondary pollution impacts, their very existence is threatened by the massive land use changes that result from the transfer of ownership and land use regulation that you have endorsed as a signatory to the Tsawwassen Treaty settlement.

The automatic exclusion of more than 400 acres of farmland from the Agricultural Land Reserve to accommodate the uses planned by the Tsawwassen Band will forever negatively impact the viability of agricultural production in the entire area. Furthermore, this sets an awful precedent in terms of the future of other agricultural land in the region.

Quite frankly, it appears as though all public process was bypassed to allow the expansion of Deltaport concurrent with a massive development of upland facilities, including warehouse development, container storage and a massive new rail yard and to allow one group of people—the Tsawwassen Band—to exclusively control local land use for the benefit of themselves, the Vancouver Port Authority and its related partners in the Asia-Pacific Gateway Initiative.

Mr. Premier, this is no way to implement long-standing growth management plans for the Greater Vancouver Region. I appeal to you to slow this process down, open it up to greater public participation and meaningful input and a full assessment of its impact based on our shared goal of aspiring to become the first urban region in the world where human activities enhance rather than degrade the natural environment.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters.

Yours truly,

John Cummins, M.P.
Delta – Richmond East

Cc: The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
The Hon. Chuck Strahl
The Hon. David Emerson, Minister of International Trade

JMC/kss