



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Hon. Lana Popham  
Minister of Agriculture  
Room 325, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X4

**January 24, 2022**

Dear Minister Popham,

I am writing to you on behalf of a number of farmers who are rightfully concerned about their ability to access financial compensation following the devastating flooding that occurred last November.

It appears Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) has some restrictions that have left many producers ineligible for relief. Farmers have let me know that they have tried to apply for the funding but have been told they technically don't qualify for any support because their farms are incorporated and bring in more than \$1 million in annual sales.

With private insurance and DFA nearing exhaustion, farmers will now be keeping a close eye on the Agri-Recovery package set to be announced soon. When it comes to the repairs and rebuilding efforts they require, they are wondering whether they will have to first find the funds to pay out of their own pockets, or be able to submit estimates for repair to get funds advanced and submit receipts for completed work. If farmers are not making the DFA threshold, then their expenses are that much greater.

Farmers are anxious about what the Agri-Recovery guidelines, set jointly by the federal and provincial governments, will look like — in large part because of what has transpired for wildfire-affected ranchers in other parts of the province who have applied but not seen any funds. These ranchers also have to submit receipts in advance to apply for funds, which is a lot to ask considering the tremendous financial burden they are facing. As a result, we have seen lower than expected amounts of wildfire recovery funds paid out.

Blueberry growers are also concerned about how they will replace the plants they have lost. The professional advice they have received from expert horticulturalists is that their plants will never return to previous production levels and must be replaced. If your officials disagree with that assessment, these producers need to know that now. Will they be compensated if they move forward with the work of replacing their plants? They would like a firm answer and commitment from you before they proceed.

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Our flood-affected farmers are distraught. Their barns and homes were filled with three to seven feet of water and they have lost livestock, feed, and crops to this disaster. They also saw equipment failures and face expensive repairs because of this catastrophic flooding.

As you know, making a living in farming is difficult at the best of times. These farmers suffering from flood damage and losses are in desperate need of financial support so they can get through these disasters. I implore you to find a way to improve the eligibility criteria and ensure they can get the funds they need to restore their operations, some of which have been in their families for generations.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter. I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible, as these farmers cannot wait much longer for the situation to be resolved. If we truly value farmers and understand their business, then we cannot allow government structure to impede their recovery.

Sincerely,

Ian Paton  
MLA for Delta South  
Opposition Critic for Agriculture and Food

cc: Bruce Banman, MLA for Abbotsford South  
cc: Michael de Jong, MLA for Abbotsford West