

June 1, 2026

Langley Farmers' Institute

State of Farming in the Township of Langley in 2026

This document has been curated by the Langley Farmers' Institute over the previous 4 years, with consultation and meetings with the following groups:

Township of Langley local farmers

The Township of Langley Agricultural Advisory Committee

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food

The Agriculture Land Commission

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Township of Langley staff

Local agriculture groups, as such the Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, Langley

Environmental Partners Society, and Foodlands

Neighbors Against Employment Lands

Metro Vancouver

Little Campbell Watershed Society

- A separate conversation will come with the Equine Industry, as a note of breeding of horses lands them under Agriculture, or, if there is a combination farm with farming and breeding.

Why is the LFI Creating this Document?

After COVID, the interruption of goods was a problem. It is more important than ever to have a local food supply, or in the event of another excessive weather event that prohibits the flow of goods.

We want to inform all residents regarding the local food supply and distribution to make Langley resilient for food and other agriculture products. During this time of agriculture issues, the LFI thought that this short document would offer some light as to the activities that occur in the land mass of 72% of the Township.

Farms are not always seen by the public, as they are located in non urban areas, and many people are not aware of the concerns that local farmers have. By reading this short document, people will be able to understand some of the difficulties that farmers have. We hope to inform everyone, so we can all work together to potentially fix some issues, and create plans for a positive path forward.

This document includes a blend of local government issues and provincial issues; we really have heard a lot of feedback over the last 4 years. We are a lucky group to have created credibility with our growers.

Water in the Township of Langley

With changes in seasons, little snow in the lower mainland this winter, extreme hot summers forecasted, low water levels in aquifers in rural areas, and an update by the province on how we now have 3 vulnerable aquifers is a major concern. Upon thinking of the water supply in all seasons, there is a strong concern that we could have more than 3 vulnerable aquifers, or that this number could be rising in the next few years.

While we were not consulted over the decommissioning of the Township wells, we are now pondering if in the event of severe drought in the vulnerable aquifer areas, if we could have still used that water for possible emergencies.

In addition, based on farm sizes in ALR areas, and non farm activities, some farms have trouble with water in their wells at all times of year- even in winter.

Recommendation: Ask the province to review our aquifers to get an update of areas of concerns as the Township moves ahead with land use decisions for rural areas and employment lands. Also, water metering could be an option, just only based on farm size and demand.

Unapproved Filling of Ditches

When you fill in a ditch, the water flows down, and into ones' basement and their property, the neighbours, and the street.

Recommendation: Bylaw officers should review activity on a more consistent basis. In addition, neighbors need to understand that filling in ditches is a cause to report, as they are watercourses that can sometimes have salmon or other wildlife, and can also cause flooding on streets and in a neighbour's property.

Development Dirt Dumping

Developers and rural and agricultural landowners; while money is to be made to dump and receive various soils, there is a bylaw in the Township that prohibits it without a permit or public consultation. The addition of these piles on rural lands can shift how water flows to neighbours.

Recommendation: Bylaw officers need to be more present and heavy handed in fines, and have the authority to revisit sites until the issue is dealt with. It is also recommended to engage with other municipalities who have been effective in dealing with soil issues and fine collection.

Zoning

With the Township of Langley's Rural Plan being 33 years old, (it is understood that these long term documents are only to be 25 years old) zoning and Rural Plan go together.

In a neighborhood, it is difficult to share the same aquifer when the land use on each parcel is different. Water is a constant issue, as some farmers run out of water in their wells in January. We know it is confusing to read about water in a 'zoning' paragraph, but water is now linked to zoning, based on provincial recognition of the vulnerable aquifers.

In addition, some farmers and landowners have reached out to the LFI, stating they received a letter in the mail, telling them their zoning has changed to light industrial when receiving their tax assessment.

Recommendation: Transparency is key when it comes to landowners. Each time a zoning change comes down to a location, there should be consultation or compensation, at the very least, some kind of warning ahead of time.

Subdividing of ALR land

This is a controversial topic. Most individuals who subdivide tend to want to leave land to their children, or make money selling pieces of the original property.

This action, regardless of the subdividing of lands in 2 categories hurts, simultaneously. Each new parcel needs a well and septic system, which can exhaust the aquifer over time.

Subdividing also lets the agriculture industry down, as it diminishes the spirit of farming for food. Local farmers' markets could see a decline in Langley farms attending as some land use on ALR lands are not used for farming, and larger farms have different streams of distribution.

Recommendation: While the ALC makes the final decision, consideration should also be made at the local government level in regards to aquifers and various changes in land use that are not agriculturally focused.

The Township of Langley and the Agricultural Land Commission

In speaking with the ALC, the TOL is one of 3 municipalities in the province that consistently refers agriculture proposals to the ALC, without dealing with an issue at the local government level.

This has created an uncooperative relationship, and keeps decisions from the ALC from reporting back, longer.

Will the Township of Langley take the stand to make decisions at the local level?

Recommendation: Mayor and Council need to vet more proposals at the local level, or, refer proposals to the AAC. (other municipalities do this)

The Township of Langley Agriculture Advisory Committee

The members of the AAC are experienced and passionate. What they can do to make agriculture in Langley better is limited by the structure of the committee system. They feel that there are no clear boundaries of responsibility.

The major concern is either keeping ALR lands for farming, or, understanding how to balance the divide of urban life, and rural life within our municipality.

Recommendation: Let the AAC members talk and decide what their role is, and have that as a policy. Have the AAC advocate for more responsibility and seek information from them on a more consistent basis. This should be done also within the Board of Variance, and an updated AAC Terms of Reference.

The Township of Langley and Metro Vancouver

Did you Know?

South of the Fraser River, Langley Township is the last Metro Vancouver municipality before the Fraser Valley Regional District.

The TOL individuals asked for a widening of the urban containment boundary, meaning that they are looking to develop in the other areas in the landscape of Langley, which are indicated as rural. While there has been community consultation, these areas are included in the Rural Plan. Any change to this area needs to be included in the revamp of the 1993 Rural Plan to know the long term path on how our rural areas will be planned. Rural zoned areas are good to be buffers between urban areas and ALR lands.

Recommendation: Involve the LFI and AAC with decisions and stop widening of the UCB until the Rural Plan is completed. Delegations to Metro Vancouver to address the “Special Study Area” in the Employment Lands on Fraser Highway are occurring at the time of this report.

Understanding Waterways, the Environment and our History

It is very important to understand that Langley Township is home to over 1,700 kms of streams leading into the Pacific Ocean, and out of that number, 1,200 kms are salmon bearing.

This means that we as a municipality have a federal mandate to protect these streams and farm in a way that is ecologically sensitive.

This point makes us very different from our neighbours of Surrey, Delta, and Abbotsford.

Because of this, our farming activities are different too. We are smaller parcelized due to the watercourses and constant subdividing, and are consistently misunderstood by policy makers.

The TOL has had various farmers' institutes in the past, and learning from the notes through our heritage societies is very important to know where we came from, and how we got here today.

Recommendation: Connect with local heritage societies and the BC Farm Museum and the respective TOL committees and agricultural groups for combined events for the community.

Premier's Task Force on Agriculture and Food Economy and how it impacts the Township of Langley

Recently, the premier created a provincial agriculture task force. This task force came up with the following items:

Implementation (tracking progress)

Water (expediting the well registration cue, including more methods of water conservation than before)

Competitiveness (eliminating PST for agriculture, involving the ag sector with other ministries, etc.)

Labor and talent (filling of labor shortages, supporting Temporary Foreign Workers)

Land (revamp of Farm Classification, Farm Trust, and effectiveness of the ALC)

Investment (Identifying gaps for access to capital, prioritizing investing in high growth farms, etc.)

For the Township landscape, all but 2 of the above items will be of benefit with most of our farms. Since Langley is primarily small and medium sized farms, land is an obstacle in maximizing a high threshold of Farm Tax status, and investment is also impacted as most of our farms are not all large enough to produce at the level of growth needed for extra funding.

Recommendation: Reduce the subdivision of ALR land, at the ALC level, and at the local government level to ensure that the big farms we have left, stay that size.

Dangerous dogs and impact on livestock

In our talks with the agricultural community, we have heard from many livestock owners that dangerous dogs have been attacking their sheep and/or chickens, resulting in a financial loss, and difficult court cases.

Recommendation: LAPS has been called out on these instances, but upon further research, the Animal Control Act is governed by the BCSPCA. The LFI will contact the Minister of Agriculture to flag this issue, and work with the BCSPCA to clarify their act as to what a livestock owner can do.

At the time of this document, we understand that Animal Control is regulating dangerous dogs, but this still does not address a vague provincial regulation. It needs to be understood that the issue here is animal vs. animal, NOT human vs. animal.

Understanding harvest vehicles on rural roads

Upon harvest season (which is all times of year between April to October), farm vehicles are on rural roads transporting crops.

Many farmers have stated that they get cut off by vehicles speeding on these roads, or are being yelled at for 'being on the road'.

Recommendation: Work with the AAC and TOL to inform local residents of the importance of these vehicles, and meet with the local police department to encourage speed zones. For the few signs out there on rural roads, redo them from just a yellow sign with a black image of a farmer on a tractor. Surrey, with little land mass of ALR land, actually uses words and pictures.

Board of Variance

Many times people approach the board of variance for asks of relaxation of certain laws, or setbacks, etc. We have been told that hardly any proposals reach the board of variance from the agricultural community. However, we have heard differently. Very differently.

Recommendation: Inquire with Community Development to see if anyone informed in agriculture is on the board.

Garbage dumping in rural ditches

Many landowners have brought forth to the LFI that many roads leading to all rural roads instead? are subject to garbage thrown in their ditches. Ditches are watercourses and must be clear from obstruction. It also creates more work on the farmer to clear and relocate the unwanted items.

Recommendation: Work with TOL to create a plan to inform residents that this is not allowed, and unwanted by farmers. It should not be the landowners responsibility.

Truck parking in the Township

Truck parking has been a concern amongst neighbours in many ways. Using excess water to wash the vehicles, run off into streams, and more. While TOL has found a place in the rural area of Aldergrove to house extra trucks, there is still illegal truck parking on ALR lands.

Poor land use on agricultural properties is a chronic issue in the Township. Not only is this taking away from producible land, it limits our vibrancy of farming in the Township. BC Laws state that you just can't do on your property what you want.

Recommendation: Bylaw officers need to be encouraged to go out and fine landowners who are using viable farmland for this illegal use. In addition, an updated Rural Plan could include different areas that would be suitable.

Bylaws

Langley Township is one of 4 regulated communities in BC. This means that we have additional provincial bylaws to keep certain agriculture activities in check for community safety.

In close examination over the past 4 years, it has come to our attention that our bylaws are very, very outdated, to which the province has asked for updates.

This can include the Township of Langley's Rural Plan, accommodation bylaw, agritourism bylaw, and so many more.

Recommendation: Continue to ask the Mayor and Council for planning staff to update these bylaws. To move ahead with having a large land mass that is ALR, it is difficult to manage with outdated bylaws that affect agricultural activities everyday.

Non food producing lands (yes, farming can be non food producing)

Farming in the Township is very diverse. Most folks think of farming as only food producing, but the definition of farming is essentially the act of growing or raising of crops. However, this also can mean non-food production under “growing or raising of crops”. In Langley, this can include flowers, turf, feed for animals, and services and products that support agriculture, such as growing medium.

It is important that Langley stay inclusive of products grown or raised here, and that brings the agriculture community together to make Langley keep its’ 72% ALR status.

Recommendation: Inventory lands that are non food producing, and dial into what supports our industry.

In closing, this report is to be a snapshot of agricultural issues that have arisen in 4 years of consulting with the agricultural community. If TOL is 72% ALR land, then we have to strive to save the land for the use of farming, and keep the Langley we know, vibrant and growing- not just only the urban areas.