

January 29, 2026

The Honourable Heath MacDonald, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Government of Canada
1341 Baseline Road, Tower 7
Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5

Sent via email: aaafc.minister-ministre.aac@agr.gc.ca

Subject: The Essential Role of the Agassiz and Summerland Research and Development Centres

Dear Minister,

On behalf of British Columbia's farmers and ranchers, thank you for the consultative approach you have brought to your department's work, in particular as discussions progress on the next policy framework.

I am writing in my capacity as President of BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) to seek your assurances that, in your tenure as Minister, two specific Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) research and development centres (RDCs) will not be considered for closure. These facilities – the Agassiz RDC and its Clearbrook sub-station, and the Summerland RDC – are of critical importance to farmers and ranchers throughout B.C. and elsewhere in Canada. Both facilities have supported the global competitiveness of Canadian agriculture for more than 100 years, producing world-leading research and providing exceptional support to industry.

We recognize the challenges of ensuring quality programming and support for the agriculture sector while also meeting the goal set by the Prime Minister's Office of achieving 15% savings over three years. However, even modest investments in research can reduce the substantial costs associated with business risk management while increasing economic returns through the development of new practices, tools, technologies, and even distinctly Canadian crop varieties. This is why industry has actively participated in and contributed resources to projects at these RDCs, such as through the commitment of industry funds to AgriScience projects.

Were either or both these RDCs to be closed, it would be impossible for industry to continue the invaluable research underway in Agassiz and Summerland. Land suitable for agricultural research in B.C. is scarce and incredibly expensive. The diverse range of crops grown and animals raised in B.C. due to our province's distinct geographic and climate conditions also means that the number of commodity groups able to afford the talent, equipment, materials, and more necessary to pursue such research is very few to none. The availability of industry funding is also highly variable, depending in large part on levies raised from crops that can range in volume and price due to a whole host of factors beyond the control of individual farmers, including climate change and geopolitical tensions.

The Government of Canada's leadership is required if B.C. and Canada are to continue to lead the world in innovations in the production and marketability of quality agricultural goods. The successes of Agassiz and Summerland, such as the introduction of new sustainable pest management tools and the development of sweet cherry and apple cultivars, have been made possible through stable, predictable funding and the long-term vision of researchers working in the Canadian public service. Industry has

played and will continue to play an active part in the successes achieved in Agassiz and Summerland, but industry alone cannot provide the kind of stability of predictability this research requires.

With the recent announcement that some AAFC research facilities will be closed, there have been concerns about the future of agricultural research that reflects the unique needs and opportunities that growing conditions in B.C. represent. Your assurances that the Agassiz RDC and Summerland RDC will continue to be operated by AAFC over the three-year period of public savings would be greatly appreciated by B.C. farmers and ranchers, allowing industry to continue to advance research with confidence that AAFC will also be an active partner.

As you know, BCAC is the unified voice of our province's agriculture industry, representing over 20,000 farm families and 96% of farmgate sales in B.C. through our 29 member associations. We work to advance policies that support a strong and competitive agriculture sector across B.C. In case of any questions or need for additional information, please don't hesitate to contact Danielle Synotte, BCAC's Executive Director, via email at dsynotte@bcac.ca or via telephone at 604-854-4454.

Thank you once again for your collaboration and attention to this matter! I look forward to our next opportunity to meet and discuss the growth and competitiveness of the B.C. agriculture sector.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Woike', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jennifer Woike, President
BC Agriculture Council