



## Media Advisory

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### Common Acres Community Farm sets Roots in Squamish!

Squamish CAN (Climate Action Network) is thrilled to announce that they have set roots and developed the first community farm in the Sea to Sky Corridor, 'Common Acres Community Farm'. CAN has secured a five-year lease on one acre of land on the north end of the Easter Seals Camp on Government Rd. This small but mighty acre has provided five-year licenses to three small scale growers:

- Rebecca Bolkowy & Nick Bolkowy from **Local Roots** (previously Republic Heirlooms)
- Vince Hoog from **Fieldstone Garlic**
- Amanda Bagliore from **Aura Rosa Florals**

*"Since 2015, we have been looking for land to lease, as well as visiting other established community farms across the province to hear about their successes and challenges. It has become increasingly clear that our community has very little food security in light of natural disasters, pandemics and the impact from the climate crisis from heat domes to flooding. Land has become unaffordable for many folks who are wanting to farm in Squamish, regardless of scale. Community farms are one model of farming that can help remove barriers for farmers to access land to farm and help encourage landowners to put land in production."* **Krystle tenBrink, Executive Director of Squamish CAN**

*"We are very happy that we can help support the local community that has been our home for 50 years. The piece of land we have available at the north end of our camp is not used for our summer program, so there will be no disruption for our campers and allow us to support local farming. It's a wonderful partnership for both of our programs,"* **Lisa Beck, CEO & President of Easter Seals.**

### Community farming has many benefits:

- **Healthy Local Economies:** Community farms are locally owned and operated, and democratically controlled. Local farms keep money circulating in their communities rather than exporting it to absentee owners or shareholders, and the benefits are passed on to local restaurants, farmers markets, retailers, and consumers.
- **Environmental Solutions:** Agriculture and farming practices can both harm and protect environmental systems and processes. Groups that farm cooperatively feel a strong sense of stewardship and responsibility to the land, but farmers do face barriers when they choose to farm sustainably. By basing their agricultural activities on sustainable practices, community farms

balance environmental sustainability with retention and protection of valuable and threatened farmland.

- Local Food Security: Rural communities import much of their food. In the context of a global food crisis, establishing local suppliers of diverse food products increases food security in small rural communities. Communities that invest in community farms help secure farmland and build local food systems for ongoing food growing.
- Market Stability: When a community invests in a farm, its long term viability and security as a food production (and social) system are supported. Farmers benefit from market and price stability when communities support their farmers through community shared agriculture programs, farmers markets, and local distribution networks.
- Social Capital and Community Amenities: Community farms build 'social capital' by involving a diverse group of individuals – farmers, community members, and organizations – with different skills and knowledge. This social capital, or wealth, helps create community amenities beyond food production, including environmental and agricultural education, recreational opportunities, and nature conservation areas.

**Source:** [Farm Folk City Folk Society](#)

*“Affordable access to land is the number one barrier that new and young farmers need to overcome today to start farms. The B.C. Land Matching Program, delivered by Young Agrarians, is thrilled to be able to support the new Common Ares Community Farm. We can’t wait to see the positive impact to the Squamish community from these farmers being able to get on land and grow food! With an aging farming population and the number of farms declining annually, it is important that we invest now in ensuring the next generation of farmers have the best chance possible to grow resilient future food systems for our communities.”* **Sara Dent, Executive Director of Young Agrarians**

The B.C. Land Matching Program (BCLMP) provides personalized land matching and business support services to farmers looking for land to start or expand their farm, and landholders interested in finding someone to farm their land. Land Matchers provide support to understand regulations, evaluate opportunities, access resources, and ultimately find a land match.

The program is delivered by Young Agrarians (YA) and funded by the Province of British Columbia. It addresses the high cost of land as a significant barrier for those seeking to enter the B.C. agriculture industry. There is no cost to participate, and our services are available to farmers and landholders of all ages across B.C. <https://youngagrarians.org/tools/land/bc-land-matching-program/>

This project has been supported by several partners including Easter Seals, District of Squamish, Young Agrarians, Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC. This project is a direct result of one of the 52 action items as part of the [Squamish Valley Agriculture Plan](#) with an objective of *‘increase agricultural land productivity and improve access to foodlands in the Squamish Valley, by removing barriers to support existing farm businesses, encourage new entrants, and attract new producers to the area’.*

**Additional Quotes:**

*“This community farm is essential to being able to scale up to a market garden size. Agricultural land this close to town is rare and I feel very fortunate to have access to this land. The Common Acres initiative is a true enabler for startup agriculture. This land has been fallow for many years and provides a great opportunity to start with organic and regenerative farming practices. Working within a collective structure allows for sharing of resources and cross pollination of ideas.”* **Vince Hoog, Fieldstone Garlic**

*“This project means the world to me. Having land security longer term, means that I can fully maximize the potential of this project instead of having to keep spending energy resetting up season after season at a new location. This means that I can provide my community with consistent delivery of a beautifully grown product while giving back to the land by practicing sustainable agriculture.”* **Amanda Bagliore, Aura Rosa Florals**

*“There is a high cost to available arable farm land. For someone starting out in farming you would need a couple million dollars just to get started. A community farm is the perfect way for a new farmer to try the farming lifestyle without taking on a huge financial risk. It is a prime opportunity to introduce new farmers to the industry.”* **Barb Hinde, Retired Farmer**