

### Agricultural tour

In 2023, the tour visited locations such as Lakeland Flowers, Aright Greentech, Taves Family Farm, and the Barrowtown pump station. "The Barrowtown pump station is the single-most critical piece of infrastructure for our ability to have farmland on the Sumas Prairie," Mitchell said. "We went there and saw this key piece of infrastructure to help people connect the dots."



In 2022, agriculture in Abbotsford was a \$3.8 billion industry accounting for 23 per cent of all jobs. (John Morrow/Abbotsford News)

# Chamber taking a future-looking approach to agriculture

The Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce is advocating for creative ways to release poorly zoned land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) for use in increasing local food production.

In 2022, agriculture in Abbotsford was a \$3.83 billion industry and accounted for 23 per cent of all jobs.

This is according to a report published by Chamber of Commerce Abbotsford called "Canada's Agricultural Hub 2022 Report."

Alex Mitchell, CEO of the Abbotsford Chamber, said this is still the case in 2024.

"It's interesting right now. The agriculture sector is growing in our community," she said, adding that innovations in technology are driving the industry forward, making the sector more resilient to economic and environmental challenges.

Aside from the ongoing impact of inflation, Abbotsford's agriculture sector has been hit hard by many challenges, such as fallout from the global pandemic (including supply-chain issues), unpredictable weather patterns, and the devastating floods of November 2021.

Mitchell and her team at Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce are focused on advocating for the agriculture sector, peti-



Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce CEO Alex Mitchell

tioning to modernize the definition of the ALR so there can be more value-added food production on farm land.

Value-added food production covers a wide range of business and operational opportunities, which happens on site. This includes activities such as processing raw fruits and vegetables, packaging food products and milling wheat into flour.

Mitchell said that the challenge agricultural producers in Abbotsford face is that the current definition of land in the ALR restricts adding value-added food production in many cases.

"We need places to process the food that is grown here. We have land shortage across the region, a shortage of locations where we can reasonably have food processing. We're advocating to re-imagine the agricultural industrial land to allow for food processing in the community that the food is grown in," she said.

Another advancement the Chamber hopes to see in Abbotsford is an increased investment in agriculture and additional incentivization to create a concentration of food production in the area.

"There is a huge opportunity for a food super-cluster in Canada's most productive

agricultural sector," Mitchell said.

Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce believes the Fraser Valley is key to Canada's food security and every level of government needs to look at this region as the place to invest in.

"Now is the time to position Abbotsford as B.C.'s leading hub for food production with increased funding and food processing to become a food super-cluster," Mitchell said.

The Abbotsford Chamber is a membership-driven organization whose priorities are drawn from the issues facing the local business community. There are many members working in the agriculture sector, and the Chamber works closely with them to advocate for their needs at a government level.

The Chamber also does policy work, speaking about relevant issues and generating policy proposals to present to both the provincial and federal governments.

"We've got some strong priorities around modernizing ALR regulations and we will present a united voice about how critical the sector is to our community," she said. Their hope is to see a pilot launch of agritech on ALR land and to explore different opportunities for land use.

Every year, the Abbotsford Chamber of

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Alex Mitchell

# Policy work big part of mandate

From A18

of Commerce hosts an agricultural bus tour. Intended to help educate and inform participants, they gather 100 community members, business owners and elected officials and tour them to some of the most innovative farms and agricultural operations Abbotsford has to offer so they can see the first-hand impact the agriculture industry has in this area.

In 2023, the tour visited locations such as Lakeland Flowers, Aright Greentech, Taves Family Farm, and the Barrowtown pump station.

"The Barrowtown pump station is the single most-critical piece of infrastructure for our ability to have farmland on the Sumas Prairie," Mitchell said. "We went there and saw this key piece of infrastructure to help people connect the dots." The mayor of Abbotsford joined the tour, spoke about the importance of the pump and shared about the resiliency of the local farmers during the 2021 floods.



# Mentorship through CYPE

Business professionals and entrepreneurs under the age of 40 are invited to join the Company of Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (CYPE) Program.

This networking group offers the

opportunity to learn from each other through professional development and mentorship and is a branch of Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce.

Events are organized, devel-

oped and led by CYPE members and adhere to the program's mandate to build, attract and grow the next generation of business leaders within Abbotsford and the Fraser Valley.

Businesses with an active Chamber membership can designate a team member to join the program and individuals can purchase an annual CYPE membership.



# Working for you in Abbotsford

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## Cost of Living

Access free or low-cost services, income support, direct funding and tax relief to help you offset the cost of global inflation.



## Safer Communities

B.C. is stepping up enforcement to keep people who commit repeat violent crimes off our streets and strengthening intervention services to make sure people have the support and treatment they need. Together, we can build safer, healthy communities for everyone.

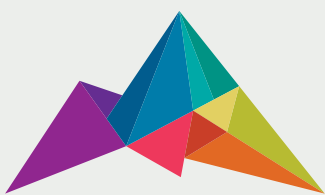
## Healthcare

B.C.'s Health Human Resources Strategy is putting people first. This plan builds on our progress to deliver better health care for everyone in B.C. It lays out a plan to build a stronger health care workforce and deliver better services for people and families.

Stay up to date on announcements & resources at MLA Pam Alexis's Facebook page: /PamAlexisABM

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# THE VOICE OF BUSINESS



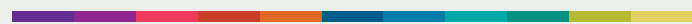
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