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### **Public Forum Demands Putting Food on the Platform**

Agriculture and food policy has a direct impact on nearly every area of importance to the citizens of BC, from climate change to the economy to health care, yet it is virtually absent from the platforms of our major political parties. **Food Matters!** on Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at the First Metropolitan Church Hall (932 Balmoral St.) is a public forum and panel discussion with representatives of all of the BC political parties. Party representatives from across the region have been invited to speak with constituents on all things pertaining to food and farming. If you have questions about how your government intends to support our economy, environment and health with a vibrant local food and agriculture plan, this is the opportunity to ask.

A recent Ipsos-Reid opinion poll found that 91% of BC residents feel “it is important that BC produce enough food so we don’t have to depend on imports from other places.” However, there is no discussion of food, farming or agriculture in the provincial platforms of either the Liberals or NDP; the Green party platform is the only one to address some of the issues pertinent to a local food economy and food security.

Most BC residents are unaware of the province’s abysmal record around food and agriculture. Despite the interest in local food and food security, provincial programs supporting agriculture in BC have steadily declined under the watch of both of BC's major political parties in the last decades. At 4% of agricultural GDP, BC now holds the dubious distinction of being in last place among Canadian provinces in provincial support for agriculture.

*"British Columbia, unlike other provinces in Canada, has ceased to support or encourage or assist in any way the business of farming, and thus, the programs that are available elsewhere in Canada...are not available in British Columbia. Year after year, BC is dead last in Canada in support for farming. We have abandoned the sector...which, by the way, spans both governments (political parties) in BC,"* said MLA Corky Evans in his 2008 BC Tour of Agriculture Final Report.

The public forum is sponsored by the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) and FoodRoots Distributors Co-op. Tea, coffee and local snacks will be available for purchase.