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For Immediate Release

Farmers and food producers in Greater Victoria receive financial boost

Victoria, BC — Farmers and food producers in the region received a boost with the BC Ministry of Agriculture’s announcement that it will provide \$50,000 to fund a feasibility study for a food-processing hub in the region.

The feasibility study will assess the viability of the Food Security Distribution Centre as a regional food hub. This food hub will ultimately connect local food producers and processors with the specialized equipment, expertise, and space to grow their businesses while providing greater food sustainability for the region. The current centre, a 22,000sq/ft warehouse space in Esquimalt was purchased in June of this year by The Mustard Seed through funding from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Vancity and the Victoria Foundation.

The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR), in partnership with The Mustard Seed and the Victoria Foundation, were the lead proponent for the \$50,000 funding, with the South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP) engaging their members and other stakeholders in the region to add support to the successful application.

“A food hub will provide an ideal venue for local agricultural businesses to expand their operations. It’s great news for the agriculture sector within our economy,” said SIPP Interim CEO Bruce Williams. “This value-added processing will lead to added revenue for the sector, more jobs, plus increased capacity for our farmers and food producers.”

“The Food Security Distribution Centre will now see a broad range of partners come together to determine how to expand its infrastructure and services to support farmers and food producers as well as promoting social good through food rescue and redistribution,” comments Linda Geggie, Executive Director of CRFAIR. “The addition of a food hub has been a high priority for the region for some time and is a key part of the Good Food Strategy to build more viable and robust local food systems.”

“The feasibility study that’s made possible by this funding will be another significant step towards our goal of creating a more robust and resilient local food economy,” added Victoria Foundation CEO Sandra Richardson. “Connecting the dots on needs and opportunities will help ensure the food hub is successful and provides long-term benefits to the food security of our region.”

“Through our continued work on programs related to food security and community development, the importance of collaboration has remained incredibly apparent. The partnerships we have

created and fostered – with other local agencies, non-profits, businesses, and institutions – have truly allowed the programs we provide to reach their full potential, positively impacting our diverse communities, and further strengthening our local food economy,” said Janiene Boice, Director of Development, Mustard Seed.

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Media Contacts

Taryn Malcolm
Marketing & Communications Specialist
South Island Prosperity Partnership
tmalcolm@southislandprosperity.ca 778-676-9755

Linda Geggie
Executive Director
Capital Region Food & Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR)
lgeggie@telus.net 250-896-7004

ABOUT SOUTH ISLAND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP

The South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP) is the economic development organization for Greater Victoria, B.C. Comprised of 50+ members, including 10 local governments, seven First Nations, three post-secondary institutions, nine industry associations and nonprofits, and nearly 30 major employers, SIPP works to bolster our region’s economic and social prosperity. This will happen by catalyzing the creation of high-quality, household-sustaining jobs, so that more families can afford to live, work and build a life here. www.southislandprosperity.ca

ABOUT CRFAIR

CRFAIR is a regional coordinating body for the Good Food Network, roughly 100 food, farm and health organization that are working in a strategic and coordinated way to implement the Good Food Strategy promoting food literacy, food access and equity and a regional food economy. The organization has been active in the Capital Region for over a decade and has worked on a range of projects including the launch of the Downtown Public Market, the Vision Sandown initiative, the Foodlands Trust, the annual Farmer2Farmer conference, the development of the FoodShare network, and the creation of the Capital Region Food System Outcomes Map. Every year the Good Food Network gathers at their annual summit in November. www.crfair.ca

ABOUT THE VICTORIA FOUNDATION

Established in 1936, the Victoria Foundation is Canada’s second oldest community foundation and the sixth largest of nearly 200 nation-wide. The Victoria Foundation manages charitable gifts from donors whose generosity allows them to create permanent, income-earning funds. The proceeds from these funds are then distributed as grants for charitable or educational purposes. To date the Victoria Foundation has invested more than \$225 million in people, projects and non-profit organizations that strengthen communities in B.C. and throughout Canada. victoriafoundation.ca

ABOUT MUSTARD SEED STREET CHURCH

Established in 1975, the Mustard Seed is a grassroots organization operating in the communities of Greater Victoria and the Cowichan Valley. Since foundation, services provided have expanded to include the operation of the food bank, food rescue programming, the provision of hot meals, family counselling, case management, training and education, and addictions recovery. These services are provided through a number of key programming areas. These include: Vancouver Island's largest food bank (serving 5000+ individuals per month); The Food Rescue Distribution Centre, which salvages and distributes rescued food to communities across Greater Victoria; The Family Centre, which provides training and guidance through the support of a registered social worker; Hospitality Programming, offering hot meals and case management to the street community; Hope Farm Healing Centre, an addictions recovery program for men; and the Mustard Seed Coffee Company, a social enterprise established in 2016 whose profits go to support the programs offered to the community.