

Moss Street Market  
1330 Fairfield Road  
Victoria BC V8S 5J1  
Nov 28/08

Farm Assessment Review  
PO Box 9432  
Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria BC V8W 9N6



Dear Review Panel,

Moss Street Market is one of Victoria's longest going and most frequently attended markets. Its' focus is community based. The entire community lends its' support right down to it taking place in the local school yard. The public walks, bikes, it is a local gathering spot. It is also supported by small organic farmers as well as many trades and crafts people. Local stores also benefit from the increased traffic.

One of the founding members of this market 17 years ago was an organic farmer Mary Alice Johnson of ALM Farms in Sooke. While BC Assessment started their split farm assessment process in Saanich they also included some farms from Sooke. Mary Alice has had full farm tax assessment on all of her 10 acres for the past 10 years. However in 2007 she was reassessed and now faces residential taxes on her 5 acres of forest land. Good growing practices need buffer zones.

The review panel recently put forth some interim recommendations of having growers submit an agrologists report and supplying income tax reports. Mary Alice has appealed her assessment at both levels of the appeal process, she included an agrologists report stating her 5 acres of forest were a necessary buffer for her organic crops and seed business. She also supplied income tax reports showing she grossed \$100,000 from her 5 acre plot. She is a full time farmer and employs 3 full time helpers. Despite all this she has lost at all levels.

Recently on Oct 18<sup>th</sup>/08 Moss Street Market held an event to support her struggle. Speakers explained the problem to the public. Volunteers from UVIC helped with a petition. In just a 4 hour window of time from 10:00am to 2:00pm, 600 signatures were gathered on a petition asking the government to include the first wave of farmers that lost their appeal in 2007 in what the review panel recommended in their June 16<sup>th</sup>/08 release as: "suspension of any further large-scale farm class projects by BC Assessment until panel report is received and decisions made".

This petition was just presented to cabinet by MLA David Cubberley. To date we have not had any success.

As you can see by the 600 signatures gathered, the public that attends Moss Street Market finds it grossly unfair that while the rest of BC can await new rules, the first wave of farmers caught up in this are facing a huge personal battle that has wasted their time

when they should have been farming. Paying residential taxes on 5 acres of land is a hardship that is detrimental to the survival of a community based market such as ours.

We understand that while the panel is limited in the scope of what it can deal with that it still puts forth a recommendation to include the farmers such as Mary Alice that have been given unequal treatment to the rest of BC, being the wider recommendation to halt further assessments until new decisions are in place. These were the first people to alert the rest of the province to the negative impact such a process would have.

Our market and the huge contribution that Mary Alice makes to the community and the local food supply is part of a national trend to promote food security and public awareness to support local food. This is not how years of hard work should be acknowledged. It is also contradictory to the governments' press releases of wanting to protect and support local food.

Thank you



Timothy Trebilcock  
Coordinator Moss Street Market

Cc MLA David Cubberley  
Cc MLA Jagrup Brar  
Cc MLA Kevin Krueger  
Cc MLA Charlie Wyse