

The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar contains the URL: <http://gardencitylands.wordpress.com/2008/02/24/promise-in-the-land/>. The browser tabs include 'Garden Ci...', 'Promi...', and 'Richmond...'. The page title is 'Promise in the Land'. The website header features a red banner with a white Christmas tree on the left and the text 'RICHMOND'S GARDEN CITY LANDS' in large white letters, with the subtitle 'Mega-density development versus prime farmland' below it. The main content area is titled 'Promise in the Land' and contains three paragraphs of text. The left sidebar includes a 'Main Menu' section with a list of pages, a 'CATEGORIES' section with links to 'Digging Deep', 'Insights', 'News', and 'News Analysis', a 'SEARCH' section with a search box and a 'Go!' button, a 'FEBRUARY 2008' calendar, and a 'RECENT POSTS' section with two entries: 'Welcome to the Garden City Lands!' and 'Hon. Gerry Ritz responds to...'. The browser's status bar at the bottom shows the page is loaded.

Promise in the Land

Around 1995, Richmond's Bill Zylmans was featured in a UBC-produced video-and-print educational package called *Promise in the Land: Sustaining Our Agriculture*. It was informing and inspiring, and we can only wish it had been fully heeded.

Despite being home to committed farming families like the Zylmans, Richmond has not even met its obligations that would help them continue to farm. The current Official Community Plan agricultural objectives, including "Maintain and enhance agricultural viability and productivity in Richmond," date back at least as far as 1999. From what a non-farmer can learn, the action did not live up to the words, which were filled out in the Richmond Agricultural Viability Strategy, developed in 2001 and looking ahead to 2021.

Recently, the pace of action has sped up. It seems that the City has even realized that there are drainage needs in the northeast. If memory serves, Bill Zylmans, Sr., was seeking relief from drainage problems there (at W & A Farms) way back when the "East-West Connector," Highway 91, was being built without regard to its farm drainage effects. Now, when the City is seeking the farmers' endorsement for removing the Garden City Lands from the ALR, the message from all those years ago is finally getting through. One wonders how much damage to crops and soil has occurred in that long stretch between when the message was sent and when it was heard.

On top of that, there is now a proposed \$10 million endowment fund that the farmers will receive if the Garden City Lands are removed from the ALR and developed. Well, there's no point in turning it down if it is ever actually created. But, after decades of having their vital needs ignored, the farmers don't need to feel indebted for big crumbs with strings attached.

If an endowment fund is in fact the best way to support Richmond farmers, exactly why should it be tied to the Garden City Lands? The obvious link would be between the endowment fund and the Brighthouse Estates, not the Garden City Lands.

Through the foresight of Richmond's visionary council of 45 years ago, Richmond obtained the Brighthouse Estates. The benefits from disposing of what survived to the 21st century have so far gone to the Olympic Oval for land and improvements, but there is well over \$100 million remaining from the current council's windfall. Surely the first priority should be an ongoing legacy, endowment of a long-term strategy to enable Richmond to remain a farmland city in which new generations can farm with due prosperity and respect.