

June 3, 2021

Graham Statt, CAO
District of Summerland
13211 Henry Avenue
Summerland, BC, V0H 1Z0

Dear Mr. Statt,

Re: Okanagan Food Innovation and Processing Hub

The Regional District Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) is pleased to support the Okanagan Food Hub in Summerland, BC. The South Okanagan-Similkameen region has a long history and reputation in agriculture and is an important economic sector for our communities. Over the last few years, many local farmers have faced fierce price competition from imported food products or larger consolidated farm businesses. In addition, more and more food entrepreneurs are popping up in our region and have had goals to scale their business. However, they have been constrained by the volumes and diversity of products they can offer because of limited commercial processing capacity to fulfill buyers' orders. They aren't able to afford the huge upfront costs of processing space and equipment.

As a Regional District, our mission is to strengthen and diversify our local economy and preserve our quality of life. We see that the Okanagan Food Hub plays a key role in the food economy by:

- aggregating products;
- alleviating some of the upfront costs through shared-use model;
- adding value back into the local economy; and
- supporting farmers and small-scale food processors.

We see the Hub as a unique initiative that contributes to building a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable region.

Social. The Hub enhances local food security and preserves local production. It provides equal access opportunity to value-added processing equipment for all farmers and food processors in the Okanagan-Similkameen region, and beyond. It will also facilitate the delivery of agri-food educational and entrepreneurship programs, food product development and testing services and business advisory support services through a multitude of partners, including local municipalities, academia, research and innovation institutes, indigenous representatives, economic development organizations, accelerators, industry associations and local community members. Its vision is inclusive and will help the existing food system become more sustainable, ecologically resilient and economically robust.

Economic. The BC tree fruit industry is primarily located in this region and this project is seen as providing a direct benefit to the hundreds of growers in this industry. Farmers can sustain themselves more months of the year through value-added production as new opportunities are available to them

that wouldn't otherwise be possible (farmers can diversify their operations). New agricultural businesses will be created across the region that will create interesting food products (offering new opportunities for local retailers and tourism businesses).

Environment. The Hub supports the highest and best use of local produce in our region. It will provide opportunities to reduce and upcycle waste (culled fruit and vegetables) and divert it to value-added production.

The RDOS and the District of Summerland have a long history of collaborating on regional projects. We are interesting in supporting this project in the following ways:

- Consider the Hub in the current South Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy review and future strategic economic development planning.
- Consider adding the Hub project to the next RDOS grant-in-aid application process, beginning Fall of 2021.
- Referring the local agri-business community to the hub for the agri-business mentorship programs, processing and technology innovation opportunities.
- Co-marketing and promoting the hub at events, through social media and the RDOS's Website.

We look forward to hearing more on the developments of this exciting initiative. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 250-809-2557, or by email at kkozakevich@rdos.bc.ca.

Sincerely,



Karla Kozakevich
Board Chair
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Cc: Brad Dollevoet, Director of Development Services, District of Summerland
Jane Campardo, Strategic Project Manager, Okanagan Food Hub