



May 28, 2012

City Council
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC
V6Y 2C1

Public Input Item 8: City of Richmond: Response to Genetically Engineered Free BC Resolution

My name is Karen Morton, I am the President & Founder of EcoUrbia Network.

- We are a local, not-for-profit society, provincially & federally registered.
- We advocate for sustainable food systems, urban agriculture & ethical e-waste disposal.
- We deliver public outreach programs related to food & waste

We have several urban farming projects in development across the north shore, with a mind to developing additional projects across our region.

Our intention is to increase local capacity & access to local, organically-grown fruits & vegetables, with a mandate to create local jobs, deliver hands-on education & operate on a cost-recovery model .

I personally initiated the urban farm concept in the City of North Vancouver, which led to the creation of the Loutet Park urban farm -> the FIRST community urban farm on the north shore, located on public land, currently operating under the governance of the Edible Garden Project.

To this end, I am here today as an advocate & proponent for sustainable food systems in support of GE Free Zones within our region & across our province.

I commend Council's unanimous support in declaring the City of Richmond a "GE Free Zone".

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this decision, and the implications it would have should this decision be reversed.

- It is also important to note that GE crops grown in Richmond would be marketed within the food supply across our region, and our province.

In the province of British Columbia, we are relatively free from GE food crops; the exception being GE corn currently being grown as feed for dairy cows,

- and the truth is, most people are unaware of this fact; and that
- we do not have a mandatory GMO food labelling requirement in Canada.



While we cannot reverse the existence of current GE crops in BC, we can refuse to increase the capacity until such a time as we achieve mandatory GMO food labelling in Canada; and as a community & a region, we MUST refuse to allow the proliferation of GE crops in our province.

The time has come for this GIANT of industrial agriculture to practice transparency through voluntary GMO labelling², and until such a time as they do, that we consistently refuse to allow the proliferation of GE crops in our region & our province.

- In my view, it is appropriate that local municipalities adopt & support a GE Free practice; and that we not leave it up to big government to make these decisions for us;
- We must consider that Canada & the U.S. are the only 2 industrialized countries in the world that do not require mandatory labelling of GMO's in our food supply -> and that Monsanto has enjoyed & profited from the practice of what I call "invisible transparency" – as consumers, we do not know what we're eating; Monsanto has, so far, successfully refused to tell us;
- There are many campaigns underway in the United States that would require mandatory GMO labelling, specifically in the states of Vermont & California -> they have yet to succeed in this regard, and the state of Vermont may yet be subjected to a lawsuit by Monsanto over their "Right to Know Genetically Modified Food Act (H.722)"¹.

Quite frankly, if there is nothing wrong with GMO foods, then why not label them?

And if patented seeds are supposedly "no different" (as is often argued) then why are they patented?

We must also take into consideration that our organic farmers & non-GMO growers, are in serious jeopardy of cross-contamination from patented GE seeds, and that there are some serious health concerns as a result of GE crops in our food supply.³

It is my intention that the scope & scale of GE crops being grown in the province of BC be halted, and that a moratorium be imposed to prevent the proliferation of GE crops in B.C.

Maintaining GE Free zones in BC means that we are adopting a cautionary principle to prevent cross-contamination of patented seeds, and that the issues surrounding GM products and their impact upon public health is not underestimated.

There are very real concerns here & as both a consumer and an advocate, I acknowledge that there are misconceptions and incorrect information surrounding GMO's, and that I am compelled by a need for reasonable safeguards to be put in place: the most important of all being the protection of our biodiverse ecosystems, a concern for the long term impacts on human health & local economies.

Monsanto is a monopoly that enjoys industrialized agriculture subsidies to its own benefit and not that of our local communities or economies.

I would also argue that the economic implications are far greater should GMO crops be allowed to proliferate in the province of B.C.⁴



By creating a GE Free zone in Richmond, that this is an appropriate cautionary approach, which proactively takes into account the possibility of “**unintended consequences**”.

Thank You.

Sincerely,

Karen Morton
President & Founder
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Submitted With Attachments:

1. *Monsanto Threatens to Sue Vermont Over Bill to Label Genetically Modified Foods: Vermonters Stand Strong For Their Right to Know What They Are Eating* (April 13, 2012)
2. *Why GMO Foods Should Be Labelled*, published in Organic Connections, Guest post by Dr. Opiyo Oloya
3. *Issues Surrounding Genetically Modified (GM) Products*, by Subhut Dharmananda, Ph.D., Director, Institute for Traditional Medicine, Portland, Oregon
4. *Genetically engineered (GE) crops and foods will not help farmers improve their financial and environmental sustainability*, A brief to the Prime Minister’s Caucus Task Force on Future Opportunities in Farming Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP), November 7, 2001