

June 20, 2022

Re: Vic High School Farm

Dear School District 61 Trustees,

Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group Society (Fernwood NRG) is a grass roots, multi service community agency that has been providing a broad range of social services, programs, community events, and celebrations for over 40 years. We work in partnership with residents, community agencies, businesses, government and non-government organizations to identify and respond to community needs.

Fernwood NRG's Good Food Box and the charitable Gift of Good Food have been buying seasonally from Mason Street Farm for many years; in recent years the Vic High Farm has been a significant source of these good greens. The Good Food Box feeds many families in Fernwood as well as families across the region, and Mason Street Farm sells to us at a substantial discount.

We hear about the impacts of this program all the time: "As a single mother with little support financially, this program has been a complete life saver. It has given us better quality of life and health. It is also delicious food!" "It makes me feel connected to the community".

If Mason St. Farm isn't able to continue growing food on this site, it will be a great loss to the neighbourhood. Fernwood NRG has food programming as a central piece of our daily operations. Families need food as part of their lives and seeing the seasonal cycles of the farm work strengthens their understanding of where our food comes from and how important farming is to our food security and livelihood.

Additionally, the Indigenous plant garden at the site is a vital piece of reconciliation. Fernwood NRG has supported Indigenous plant programming and know that if the plants were to dug up without proper care it would potentially harm the plants and reconciliation efforts. We've been taught by knowledge keepers that plants are our relatives, and need to be treated with respect. We hope the School District will consult the Indigenous leaders and knowledge keepers to ensure that plants are cared for.

Fernwood NRG hopes that the district will work to find a solution to these challenges in a good way that acknowledge the significant role the farm and Indigenous plant garden play in the neighbourhood.

Sincerely,

The Staff & Board of Directors of Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group Society