



Reference: 50198

June 30, 2026

VIA EMAIL: cmcneilsmith@crd.bc.ca

Cliff McNeil-Smith, Chair
Capital Region District Board
625 Fisgard Street, PO Box 1000
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 2S6

Dear Cliff McNeil-Smith:

Thank you for your letter of April 30, 2026, to the Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture and Food (AF); the Honourable Tamara Davidson, Minister of Environment and Parks; the Honourable Ann Kang, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport; and to me, regarding the management of Canada geese in the Capital Region District (CRD). I am pleased to respond and apologize for the delay.

I appreciate the detailed information you provided regarding the environmental, agricultural, and public health challenges associated with this avian population. As you note, Vancouver Island is home to Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) populations whose numbers have grown over several decades. This includes resident, non-migratory populations in the Salish Sea area. The Province recognizes the historical context of Canada goose introduction and the resulting complex and locally specific impacts associated with these populations, including pressures on agricultural production, ecosystem health, and drinking water source areas.

I acknowledge the CRD's request for provincial support to advance regulatory changes, including the designation of resident, non-migratory Canada geese as an "overabundant" population and the expansion of available management tools under federal regulations. Canada geese are primarily managed by the Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* (MBCA) and associated regulations. The Province works collaboratively with ECCC to bring forward potential amendments to the Migratory Birds Regulations during the bi-annual

regulatory review cycle. While no provincial proposals were submitted during the most recent intake, the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) is open to working with the CRD and regional partners to inform submissions for consideration in the intake cycle opening in 2027.

I understand that the CRD faces challenges managing geese in sensitive locations, including the Greater Victoria Drinking Water Supply Area and agricultural lands where geese congregate near water bodies. We recognize that restrictions related to the discharge of firearms near water bodies can limit management options in some settings. However, ECCC remains the primary authority for permits related to migratory birds, including those issued under sections 64 and 69 of the Migratory Birds Regulations. If the CRD is interested in exploring exemptions under sections 64 (1) and 69 (b) of the Migratory Birds Regulation, I recommend continuing discussions with ECCC. The Province may play a supporting role where provincial authorizations are required.

Managing resident Canada goose populations often requires a combination of tools. Regulated hunting is one mechanism; however, it is not suitable in all settings, particularly in urban areas or where safety considerations and local bylaws apply. An integrated approach, combining deterrence, habitat management, controlled access where appropriate, and coordination across jurisdictions is often necessary to address site-specific challenges. WLRS is committed to continuing discussions with CRD, First Nations, and stakeholders to review management actions currently underway, share information, and to explore practical, effective, and appropriate coordinated approaches within the existing legislative framework.

I recognize the concerns you raised regarding impacts to agricultural producers, including crop damage and broader implications for local food production. AF offers a suite of business risk management programs (AgriStability, Production Insurance, Agriculture Wildlife Program (AWP)) to help farmers safeguard against significant financial losses, from things like crop damage by waterfowl. Although the AWP is limited to grain, silage corn, and forage crops, the other two programs are not limited by crop type. While expanding the existing AWP is not a viable option, focus should remain on prevention and mitigation of waterfowl populations. For the past five years, AF has focused 100 percent of its mitigation funds on Vancouver Island, to support lure cropping which draws waterfowl away from damaging higher value agriculture crops. Detailed information for AWP can be found at [Agriculture Wildlife Program - Province of British Columbia](#), or you can reach out directly to Tyler Morhart at Tyler.Morhart@gov.bc.ca to discuss program parameters.

The Province supports ongoing collaboration with local governments, First Nations and federal partners to improve understanding and management of Canada goose populations. If the CRD is interested in proposing changes to the Migratory Birds Regulations, provincial staff are available to discuss submission criteria for future

Cliff McNeil-Smith, Capital Regional District Board Chair

proposals. Please contact Sean Pendergast at Sean.pendergast@gov.bc.ca to discuss population management options, or Gerad Hales at Gerad.Hales@gov.bc.ca to discuss regulatory proposal submission criteria.

Thank you for writing and for your ongoing efforts to address this complex issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randene Neill", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Randene Neill
Minister

pc: The Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture and Food
The Honourable Tamara Davidson, Minister of Environment and Parks
The Honourable Ann Kang, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
Tyler Morhart, Manager, Agriculture Wildlife Program, Ministry of Agriculture and Food
Sean Pendergast, Fish and Wildlife Section Head, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Gerad Hales, Wildlife Management Specialist, Small Game and Birds, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship