



CITY OF LANGLEY

COUNCIL MEMBER MOTION

TO SUPPORT IN SOLIDARITY INDIAN FARMERS – Councillor Wallace

BACKGROUND:

Since August 2020, farmers in India have been protesting against three agricultural bills which were enacted last September by the Indian Government:

- The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill allows farmers to deal directly with corporations and private buyers, as opposed to doing business through the Indian government. Prior to this, the government provided farmers with Minimum Support Pricing (MSP), a fixed price that would insure farmers against any substantial falls in farm prices.
- The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, deals with pricing. The bill requires farmers, corporations, and private buyers to negotiate contracts with promised "price assurance," rather than a regulated price set by the Indian government.
- The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, aims to modernize India's food chain by reducing stockpiling, and removing commodities like "cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes" from the current list of essential commodities. It also aims to promote investment in cold storage and give farmers the freedom to produce, move, distribute and supply their products.

Farmers are concerned the new laws will drive down prices and remove safeguards to protect them against corporate takeovers. They also claim the government did not hold sufficient consultation before signing the laws into force.

India's agriculture sector employs 60% of India's population of 1.27 billion and accounts for 23% of its GDP. However, the annual income of a farming household in 2017 was 36,938 rupees- or approximately \$642 CAD. A majority of farmers own less than one hectare of land and live precariously from one harvest to the next. The farmers are calling for the three Acts to be repealed. India's Supreme Court issued an order in January suspending the bills and appointing a committee to oversee negotiations.

The Indian government's often harsh treatment of the protestors and actions restricting access to the internet has prompted criticism from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

With more than 1.3 million Indians currently residing in Canada, there are strong ties between India and Canada. Protests have been held in communities across Canada. The Canadian government has indicated its support of the farmers and many provincial governments, including BC, have followed suit.

MOTION:

WHEREAS Indian farmers are protesting against changes made to the agriculture laws by the Indian government;

AND WHEREAS the protesting farmers, who have long struggled with poverty, and suicide, fear the new laws will severely impact their livelihood negatively, leave them at the mercy of corporations by taking away the safety net of guaranteed prices for certain crops, and at greater risk of losing their lands to corporate control or otherwise;

AND WHEREAS 60% of the population of India still depends on agriculture for survival;

AND WHEREAS Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are asking the Indian government to immediately stop its crackdown on protesters amid ongoing nation-wide demonstrations against this legislation;

AND WHEREAS lending our voice to support Indian farmers shows that we value the fact that local farmers around the world are indispensable to the social and economic fabric of countries;

AND WHEREAS the greater Vancouver, including the City of Langley is the hub of multiculturalism, including Indians, the majority of whom are Punjabi Sikhs who mostly belong to the farming families from Punjab;

AND WHEREAS the BC government, the major federal political parties, and others across the country are speaking out against these legislative changes and/or the crackdown on protesters:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Langley stands in solidarity with the Indian farmers and supports the rights of Indian farmers to speak out against these laws and any repressive measures against Indian citizens and their right to expression and liberty.