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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation

### **People in Merritt will benefit from rural development supports**

MERRITT – The Province is providing a series of rural development grants in the Nicola Valley to support economic development and diversification.

This is the next step in the StrongerBC Economic Plan and the continued recovery efforts in Merritt after the November 2021 floods.

“People in Merritt have been through a lot in the past year, and they know how important business recovery is for community rebuilding,” said Roly Russell, Parliamentary Secretary for Rural and Regional Development. “Merritt has demonstrated both grit and creativity in navigating their recovery, and I want to thank everyone in Merritt who continues to work so hard to rebuild a vibrant, resilient community. Our government, through our StrongerBC Economic Plan, will always be here to support communities to help build strong, vibrant and diverse economies in rural B.C.”

Government is providing a \$1-million rural development grant to the Small-Scale Meat Producers Association to build a community abattoir in the Merritt area, which will provide meat processing and cut-and-wrap services to local farmers and ranchers.

“This project represents significant job and economic opportunities for the region, while ensuring local ranches, abattoirs and businesses are part of a strong, resilient B.C. food system,” said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture and Food. “With the recent changes to B.C.’s meat-licensing system and investments in facilities like the Nicola Valley community abattoir, this revitalization of the small-scale meat industry makes it easier to produce, buy and sell B.C. meat in our rural communities, and helps strengthen our food security and food resiliency.”

The abattoir will be a government-inspected licensed facility with a full range of services to process red meat. This facility will create jobs, increase the availability of local products and enhance food security in the region. Since local producers are affected by a lack of processing capacity, this abattoir will provide new opportunities for meat processing, and enables local farmers and ranchers to grow their businesses and create greater opportunities to maximize profit.

“My partner and I moved to the Nicola Valley in 2016 planning to expand our business to meet the growing demand for well-raised, local meat. But we soon found that the processors we relied upon were not able to keep up with our production and we had to scale the business back instead of growing it,” said Julia Smith, a Merritt pork and beef producer and executive director of the Small-Scale Meat Producers Association. “We were on the verge of giving up. But now we are ready to press on, because this facility will allow us, and other local family

farms and ranches, to grow and thrive while providing greater food security for the community.”

The Province is also providing a \$1-million rural development grant to the Scw’exmx Tribal Council toward Gateway 286 in Merritt. Gateway 286 is a commercial and tourism-focused development. The funding will go toward fire protection infrastructure to further the progress of this multi-phased economic asset for the region.

“After an unbelievable year of fires, floods and a pandemic, we welcome the B.C. government’s \$1-million grant that will bolster our rural community, support good-paying jobs and much-needed economic development,” said Terrence (Lee) Spahan, director, Spayum Holdings LP and Scw’exmx Tribal Council. “The Gateway 286 project is a 30-plus-year vision of past and present Nicola Valley Indigenous Chiefs and these monies will take our commercial and tourism development one more step closer to reality. This project will enhance the experience of the travelling public by providing much-needed services, and it will provide good-paying jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for the residents of the Nicola Valley.”

As well, the City of Merritt is benefiting from a grant related to economic recovery for communities that were affected by the flooding. A \$500,000 grant went to the City of Merritt to complete economic development projects and initiatives to support long-term economic recovery, including sustainable tourism, and business and investment attraction. This is in addition to \$329,000 in provincial funding for the City of Merritt to update flood-hazard mapping and develop new flood-mitigation plans.

The StrongerBC Economic Plan moves British Columbia forward by tackling the challenges of today while growing an economy that works for everyone.

The plan builds off B.C.’s strong economic recovery and works to address two long-standing challenges – inequality and climate change – by closing the skills gap, building resilient communities, and helping businesses and people transition to clean-energy solutions. The plan sets two main goals for the province – inclusive growth and clean growth – and puts forward six missions to keep B.C. on track.

**Learn More:**

Learn more about the StrongerBC Economic Plan: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/plan>

Learn more about the Small-Scale Meat Producers Association:  
<https://smallscalemeat.ca/about-us/>

**Contact:**

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