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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

### **Funding helps strengthen food security in Greater Victoria**

VICTORIA – Residents with limited income living in Greater Victoria will soon have improved access to local and nutritious food.

The Victoria Community Food Hub Society’s Food Connections project received a provincial grant of \$350,000, administered through the Victoria Foundation’s Food Security Provincial Initiatives Fund. Food Connections is a program that links locally produced food and food recovered from regional grocery stores to a certified kitchen to create value-added products. Shelf-stable food is then developed for community programs, markets and schools.

“It is unacceptable that more than half a million British Columbians experience household food insecurity,” said Nicholas Simons, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. “We are working with community partners to help those in need get nutritious food.”

The funding will support the purchase of food-processing equipment for Food Connections to extend the life of local food and decrease food waste.

The equipment will also play a vital role in Food Connections’ training kitchen. This kitchen provides opportunities for skills development, particularly for limited-income, racialized, Indigenous and newcomer participants. Participants learn food handling, processing, sorting and recipe creation to support personal skill development and employability.

Food Connections is a local partnership with the Victoria Community Food Hub Society. Their training incubator and food-processing kitchen contributes to the Mustard Seed Food Bank and Victoria Community Food Hub’s distribution through 70 food charity organizations and three school district meal programs through the Food Share Network.

Food security is identified as a key issue in TogetherBC, the Province's poverty-reduction strategy. Since 2019, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has provided nearly \$26 million for planning and implementing poverty-reduction and food-security initiatives in communities throughout B.C., including First Nations communities.

This funding builds on \$1.9 million the Province provided for the Mustard Seed Food Bank to help buy the Food Security Distribution Centre at 808 Viewfield Rd. to function as the Capital Region’s food hub.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food has invested \$800,000 in the Victoria Community Food Hub and more than \$8 million in the 12 regional food hubs that make up the BC Food Hub Network. The hubs help small- and medium-sized businesses access shared food- and beverage-processing space and equipment to increase their production and sales while contributing to local food security.

**Quotes:****Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture and Food –**

“By leveraging our BC Food Hub Network, we are working hard to ensure we have resilient local food systems that connect communities to food and beverage options with ingredients from their own backyard. We will keep investing in programs and projects that increase food security for British Columbians while also bolstering our food economy.”

**Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development, MLA for Esquimalt-Metchosin –**

“Our government wants to ensure all British Columbians can access safe, healthy food that is culturally appropriate for their lifestyle. We’re investing in community partners and non-profits to maximize the good work they are doing, because no child, youth or adult should be going hungry in our province.”

**Sandra Richardson, CEO, Victoria Foundation –**

“Food affects many aspects of our life. Every person deserves access to healthy food and the funding provided here will ensure that equitable access continues to be a priority. The Victoria Foundation is proud to work collaboratively to increase access to nutritious local food in our region. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners to create a vibrant, caring community for all.”

**Linda Geggie, executive director, Victoria Community Food Hub –**

“Not only are we working to increase access to healthy local food, but we are also investing in people. This funding is vital in supporting access to good food and having infrastructure in place to create livelihoods in a sustainable and expanding area of the economy.”

**Ty James, farmer –**

“This funding will help support a central food-processing hub and ensure food that is grown is not wasted. A tremendous amount of work goes into producing high-quality fruits and vegetables, so transforming those raw materials into products with a longer shelf life means viable agricultural enterprises can turn a profit as well as provide the community food bank with nutritious food for people in need.”

**Learn More:**

TogetherBC, B.C.’s poverty-reduction strategy: [gov.bc.ca/togetherbc](http://gov.bc.ca/togetherbc)

Victoria Community Food Hub Society: <https://www.victoriacommunityfoodhub.com/>

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