

## Farmer is cut off from his crop

Warren Nottingham will see new highway cut through his Ladner farm, leaving blueberries on the other side

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One local farmer, whose land will be intersected by the South Fraser Perimeter Road, is fuming over how he was treated during negotiations with the province and says he's not giving up without a fight.

Warren Nottingham said he started discussing plans for the new highway with Gateway representatives more than two years ago. While the precise route for the road has changed several times over the years, it's always involved some portion of Nottingham's farm, which has been in the family since the 1940s.

The 249-acre farm was primarily a dairy operation until about 20 years ago. Now Nottingham produces mostly field crops, primarily blueberries, beans and peas.

The property on the eastern side of Ladner abuts Burns Bog and includes a portion of what has become known as Sherwood Forest, an area that's so ecologically important it stalled the progress of the road for more than a year, Nottingham said.

The life-long Ladner resident grew up on the land and knows it, and its inhabitants, like the back of his hand.

Driving around the property and its different fields, he easily points out where the bears used to roam and the location of several First Nations middens.

The east end of the property is intersected by a right of way as brightly coloured flags tied to wooden stakes in the ground mark its place.

The province is claiming the 200-foot wide right of way and another 64 acres of Nottingham's land for the SFPR. He received an expropriation notice July 10 and as of late last week, the land belonged to the province.

That's not the end of the story, however.

The expropriation of more than 80 acres of Nottingham's farmland essentially cuts him off from the remainder of his property and his blueberry fields. He said he has been told that once the expropriation is final, he will no longer be able to legally drive directly through his property to the 10 acres of blueberry fields, but will have to go around and



CREDIT: photo by Jessica Kerr

Warren Nottingham has had more than 80 acres of his Ladner farm expropriated to make way for the South Fraser Perimeter Road.

enter on what he has described as a "road that doesn't exist."

The roadway, which separates his property from Burns Bog, is covered in sawdust and bark mulch. It's rotting and uneven in places, and covered in large holes. It's also barricaded at either end by a locked gate.

Nottingham said there is no way he will be able to access that part of the farm using that road with his equipment. At the same time, his blueberries will be ready to harvest next month.

"I will continue using it [his current access route] till they kick me off," he said. "August is harvest period and nothing will keep me off the land."

Nottingham said the Agricultural Land Commission has an underpass proposed that would give him access to that part of his property. However, he said he has been told by Gateway the province does not have to construct a new access point for him.

The last two years have been filled with many meetings. At each one, Nottingham said, he was looking for timelines and commitments.

"They weren't very committal at all," Nottingham said. "Our consultation with them has been a bad experience. We found that this consultation process was a scam."

While not commenting on any specific case, Gateway executive director Geoff Freer said the government has been working with many landowners for two to three years. He said Victoria strives to come to an agreement with every property owner and to avoid expropriation.

"We do everything we possibly can to go to a consensual agreement," Freer said.

He said Gateway has already come to an agreement with 50 per cent of those who own land required for the SFPR, and so far has only had to pursue expropriation in one case.

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