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24
hours

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Taking a look at Surrey's election 4

MONDAY OCTOBER 27, 2008 Vol 3 No. 145

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Farm plot thickens

Petition bolsters move to save UBC farm

LAND-USE ISSUE: UBC students Matt Filipiak and Andrea Morgan hold petitions with 15,000 signatures demanding protection for the UBC farmland.

UBC students are scrambling to save Vancouver's last farm from the looming danger of development.

Today, Matt Filipiak and Andrea Morgan are presenting UBC president Stephen Toope with a petition, signed by more than 15,000 people, demanding the university preserve its on-campus farm, as is, rather than reduce

its size or pave it over for housing.

"The farm is something that attracts people, students and donors," said Filipiak, past president of the UBC Grad Student Society.

"It can help UBC in its missions of sustainability and climate neutrality."

The school, with public consultation, is drafting a campus

plan for the physical evolution of its endowment lands. The previous mandate listed a 24-hectare area, which includes the farm, in a future housing reserve.

Currently students and faculty use the land for research, along with aboriginal groups and educators working with children.

Morgan, Friends of the Farm president, said one of three proposals to change the farmland's

borders to cover the surrounding forest would be devastating because a decade would pass before crops could grow in the acidic soil.

UBC vice-president of community relations, Stephen Owen, said an independent report shows the amount of cultivated land increasing to eight hectares.

But, further consultation with experts is needed, Owen said, to

determine the ecological relationship between the farm and the forest that surrounds it, before plans for development can be made.

"The term future housing reserve [is] a really unfortunate term in my view because it leads people to assume that it's all going to be housing and it's not," he said.

- Dharm Makwasz 24 hours