

POWELL RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

MOTION

June 24, 2004

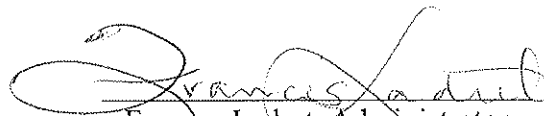
MOVED **“Director Brenda DeGraag”**

SECONDED **“Director Dave Murphy”**

THAT the Board declare the Powell River Regional District a “Genetically Engineered Free Crop Area”;

AND THAT the Board accept the report from Chair Palmer on this subject and endorse its recommendations.

I hereby certify the above to be a true
and correct copy of a motion adopted by the
Board of the Powell River Regional District
at its meeting dated June 24, 2004.


Frances Ladret, Administrator

Dated this 8th day of **July**, 2005.

THE POWELL RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT A GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FREE CROP ZONE

CHAIR, COLIN. S. PALMER

A significant number of people, especially in the local farming community, have appreciated our Regional Board declaring the Powell River Regional area a genetically engineered free crop zone. It is likely a significant number of people are not aware of its need, significance, or the implications. Such a declaration is among the first in Canada. Other declarations or even laws exist in Western Australia, and places such as California. Europe and Japan will not accept or buy many genetically engineered crops or foods.

Such a Zone means it is free of propagating, cultivating or raising genetically engineered organisms by persons, firms, or corporations. Such a Zone is not regulated at this stage, but is rather a statement of concern and support for those who wish to ensure seed supplies remain in the public domain.

This report is set against the following background. A mere dozen species of plants account for over 80% of the modern world's annual tonnage of all crops. Only a few major food plants have been domesticated in modern times. Only 14 or so animals have ever been truly domesticated. There are limited places on Earth where food crops can be grown.

The publicly owned seed supply. The present seed system in Canada has been publicly owned, but due to Canadian Government policies, the seed system could become privately owned and controlled. Patent laws, intellectual property laws, corporate tactics to support profits and shareholders, plus government policies are all combining to affect the system.

Pesticide companies are speeding up the process of controlling the seed industry along with the push for intellectual property rights, which it is claimed, are an incentive to innovate. However, the reverse is probably a truer state of affairs. Drug patent rights, for example, clearly resulted in higher prices, a lack of availability for poor countries, and are a portent of things to come with seeds and food.

Many Canadian crops are not a result of farmers taking natural wild crops and successfully domesticating them. In fact, most crops here are a result of seeds being brought from other parts of the world. A free exchange of seeds was the factor which made this possible. Farmers have been the agency for freely exchanging information on plant breeding which has resulted in Canada's agricultural diversity. Until the last few years most formal research and development in plant breeding has been left to the Canadian public sector. It has always been felt that the research is for the national economic good. The open exchange has not encouraged private development or private monopolies of seeds.

A privately owned seed supply. It is not well understood by the general public that for the last 30 years Canadian Government policy has deliberately encouraged private control of seed supply and plant breeding. The process is well advanced and explains why many farmers need public support, and why the food system is ripe for private control.

The Government, Corporations and Seeds. One of the triggers for private seed development was the intellectual property regimes in the U.S. and Europe in the 60's. Add to that biotechnology interests, and it isn't difficult to understand how the private sector saw financial opportunities. Seeds suddenly had an enormous commercial interest.

One Canadian Government milestone on the way to privatization was the **1983 National Biotechnology Strategy** which was launched with agriculture as the key sector. This was at the end of the Trudeau era, to be

